

# THE CAPTIVES OF THE KAID



JF  
MARC

Dossy Staudrey  
Wm R. Ryde  
North Ryde

# THE CAPTIVES OF THE KAID


By Bessie Marchant

Author of "Lost on the Saguenay,"

"The Bertrams of Ladywell," etc.

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# The Captives of the Kaid.

## CHAPTER I.

### The Turned Picture.

**O**AKENHURST Manor was a big, sombre house, so buried in branching ivy and shadowed by tall trees that sun and wind had little chance of bringing their cheering influences to bear upon it, and the occupants, with one exception, were scarcely more lively in their appearance than their abode.

Squire Trevor, who owned the Manor and all the wide acres belonging to it, was a tall old man, white-haired and bowed of aspect, but with a fierce eye and a proud bearing that kept sympathisers always at a respectful distance.

His wife, the Lady Alicia Trevor, was also old and white-haired, a gentle, timid lady, who always seemed afraid to speak above a whisper in her husband's presence.

This fear was also noticeable in her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Raymond Trevor, a young widow, who, with her thirteen-year-old daughter Lalla, had her home at Oakenhurst Manor.

Lalla was the only one of the household who never shrunk or shivered at the sound of her grandfather's voice, or the sharp, impatient thud of his silver-topped ebony stick. She had done as she liked with him for seven years past, and although his temper did not grow sweeter with increasing years and added infirmities, the harsh lines of his wrinkled face always softened to a smile when his dancing sprite of a grandchild came floating across his path.

She was small for her age, a veritable fairy of a child, with merry, dark-gray eyes, and a cloud of fair hair, that was mostly tumbling like a golden veil over her face and eyes. Her father had died when she was a mite of six: he had been killed in a skirmish with natives on the Indian frontier, and her recollection of him was so faint as to be quite devoid of grief, whilst on her mother she lavished all the love of her heart.

The days at Oakenhurst Manor passed with a quiet monotony that would have



proved terribly trying to most people ; but Lalla contrived to extract such an amount of amusement from everything, that it never even occurred to her that her life was a lonely one, and devoid of many of the pleasures common to children growing up amid more cheerful surroundings.

Most of her lessons were done with her mother, and so there was no governess to hamper her hours of freedom with restrictions of an annoying kind ; whilst the maid, whose duty it was to attend the wanderings of the Squire's grand-daughter, was a feather-headed, irresponsible damsel, much more likely to lead the little lady into mischief than to keep her out of it.

One morning, about the middle of July, the Squire, who always opened the mail-bag at the breakfast-table, distributing the letters with his own hands, received a missive which seemed to annoy him very much.

"It is about that painting I am having done for the justices' room at Warminster," he said, glowering across the table at Mrs. Trevor, as if she, and not the artist, were to blame for the offending letter.

"Yes?" queried Lalla's mother, in a meek, frightened tone ; whilst the butler,

who was in waiting, tiptoed about the room with as much caution as a pussy cat skirting mud-puddles, for when the Squire was angry everyone had to be careful.

“The artist has written to say that the pose I had decided on won’t do—isn’t natural, or artistic, or something. Downright impudence, I call it; for who has a better right to determine the attitude in a portrait than the person who is to pay for it, I should like to know?” and the irate gentleman glared angrily round the room, as if challenging anyone to contradict him.

“But, Granty, the man who makes the picture must know best what looks nicest,” broke in Lalla, with a rippling laugh of amusement, pausing with her porridge spoon half-way to her mouth.

“Be quiet, miss; you know nothing about it!” said the old gentleman testily, but with such a lessening of his anger that Mrs. Trevor ventured to speak again.

“Would it not be well for you to go up to town to see him?”

“Just what he suggests! As if I had nothing better to do than to be running about the country at the beck and call of every painting fellow whom I may choose

to honour with a commission," grumbled the old gentleman.

"Still, it would be much more satisfactory to see him now, and get the business settled," Mrs. Trevor said, ignoring the resentment in the Squire's tone.

"I will go if you will accompany me, Amy. It will be two to one then, and a hard matter indeed if we can't have things as we like," he replied. In reality he was becoming very dependent on his meek, gentle daughter-in-law, who, despite her retiring disposition, was a veritable tower of strength in an emergency.

"I can come if you wish; only in that case Lalla's lessons will be neglected," Mrs. Trevor answered, in a dubious tone, for these hindrances to regular study were becoming of very frequent occurrence, and it was not good for the little girl to run wild too much.

"Oh, don't trouble on my account, Mummy dear; I was just feeling as if I should like a holiday," interposed Lalla cheerfully; and her gray eyes sparkled, as she thought of more than one scheme of enjoyment that would be possible if only the unexpected holiday was secured.



A little more talk between her mother and grandfather, then it was finally arranged that Mrs. Trevor should go to town with the Squire by the ten-fifty fast train; and Lalla ran off to her grandmother's room, to tell the old lady of the intended expedition.

Lady Alicia was very feeble and infirm, never rising until noon, and often not leaving her room for days together, so that, practically, Mrs. Trevor was mistress of the house, giving orders, receiving visitors, and paying calls in return.

Lalla danced into her grandmother's room in a state of great glee. "I'm going to have a holiday again to-day, Grannie; that makes three specials in a fortnight. Is it not perfectly lovely?"

"I should think you would get tired of having to amuse yourself so much. If you cannot find anything else to do, you may come to me, and I will give you a lesson in knitting," said the old lady, with a twinkle in her eye, knowing well Lalla's distaste for sitting-down occupation of any kind.

"Oh, Grannie dear, knitting is not to be thought of in fine weather like this. When winter comes, and the days are dark and gloomy, it will be quite time enough for



humdrum things of that kind," cried Lalla, twirling round on the tips of her toes.

"It is never too soon to learn to do useful things," replied Lady Alicia gently, who, although she was an earl's daughter, and had a large fortune in her own right, had spent all her leisure hours for many years in working for the poor and the suffering.

"I do learn to do useful things, ever so many of them," asserted Lalla, with great energy; "but to-day I have a most beautiful plan in my head, though I'm afraid there isn't anything useful in it, only amusing. Will you lend me a velvet gown, Grannie?"

"My dear child, what for?" demanded Lady Alicia in surprise, for the request was such an extraordinary one.

"I am going the round of the picture galleries this morning, like the society ladies do when they are in town for the season. I want to pretend that I am a countess, and it is so difficult to do that, unless I can have yards and yards of velvet sweeping along the floor behind me," Lalla answered, drawing herself up to her most stately pose, and marching slowly across the room for the old lady's benefit.

"It must be an old one, then, for I cannot

have you dusting the floors of the corridors with the tails of my velvet gowns," Lady Alicia said, laughing at Lalla's imitation of a great lady.

An hour later, Lalla rustled her way down the back corridor to the housekeeper's room, in order that Mrs. Parker might see her dressed up in an old gown of moire antique, a long lace antimacassar draped across her shoulders for a shawl, soiled white kid gloves on her hands, and a paper fan, which she wielded with a languid air, as if the exertion were almost too much for her.

"Dear me, Miss Lalla, how fine you are ! What is the play now ?" asked Mrs. Parker, withdrawing her head from the press where she was sorting table-linen.

"I am going the round of the picture galleries this morning. I suppose you can spare me, Esther. It is rather dull with no one in attendance ; besides, these gloves are awkward in opening doors," Lalla replied, holding up one hand, which was covered with a dilapidated glove three sizes too big for it.

"Certainly, Miss Lalla, Esther is at your service," replied the housekeeper, smothering a laugh with difficulty, as she turned

again to the press ; and Esther being summoned, the two set off without further delay to the long gallery in the rarely used left wing, where the family portraits hung.

It was not so much fun as Lalla had anticipated, prancing along the black oaken floor of the gallery with her grandmother's long gown rustling behind her ; and she was more than half-disposed to slip out of her borrowed plumes, and go for a romp in the sunshine out of doors, when her attention was attracted by a small door in a recess at the far end of the gallery.

"Esther, where does that door lead to ? I have never noticed it before," she said in great surprise, turning to the maid who followed just behind.

"It is only a little room with more pictures, Miss Lalla. I expect you haven't noticed it, because when the door is shut it looks only like a panel in the wall," said Esther, pushing the door wide, which already stood slightly ajar.

Lalla tripped daintily over the threshold, gathering her long skirt up over one arm, for the floor of the little room was thick with dust, a great contrast to the well-kept gallery beyond.



There were many pictures on the walls—dingy old oil-paintings, unfinished water-colours, crayon sketches, and some miniatures painted on ivory—but the thing which instantly arrested Lalla's attention was a picture with its face to the wall.

“Esther, what picture is that? I want to see it,” she said, with a touch of imperious command in her tone.

“Oh, Miss Lalla, you mustn't look at that; it is the ‘Turned Picture,’” said Esther, dropping her voice to a mysterious undertone.

“What is that—something ugly?” asked Lalla, making a movement towards retreat, whilst her cheeks blanched. She was a nervous child, with a horror of things hideous or uncanny.

“Dear me, no; it is only Mr. Edward's portrait, and they say he was the handsomest man in all the countryside,” Esther said hastily, anxious to reassure the little lady.

“Who was Mr. Edward, and why was his picture turned?” demanded Lalla, in interested tones, going a step nearer to the reversed picture, and gazing up at its dusty back.

“Your uncle he was, and the Squire's



eldest son. He would have been the heir, you know, if it hadn't been for his quarrel with his father, and his going away like that," Esther answered, in the same mysterious undertone.

"Did Granty have another son besides my father, and what did they quarrel about?" cried Lalla, with dilating eyes, for this was a page of the family history with which she was totally unacquainted.

"Yes; there were two—this Mr. Edward, and your father, Mr. Raymond," said Esther, proud of her superior information, and anxious to impart all she knew. "Mr. Edward was his father's favourite, and there was nothing too good or too great for him to have, until he crossed his father by refusing to marry the lady the Squire had chosen for him."

"What happened then?" queried Lalla with bated breath, for the story had a real and vivid interest for her.

"The Squire told him to choose between the lady, and being cast out of his home and inheritance—for the Manor isn't entailed, and the Squire can will it to whom he pleases. Mr. Edward took him at his word, left home, and has never been heard of from that day to

this. In his first anger your grandfather turned this picture round, I've heard my mother say, and it has been turned ever since."

"Get a stool, Esther, or a chair, or something, and clamber up to turn it round for me to look at, for I must have just one peep at him, this uncle that I have never even heard of," said Lalla, in a perfect fever of excitement. And Esther, nothing loth, hurried out to the gallery, returning with a high stool, upon which she clambered; then, by dint of stretching, managed to turn the picture.

"Oh, what a nice kind face he has! How I wish Granty had not quarrelled with him and driven him away!" murmured Lalla, with tears in her eyes, as she stood with clasped hands, gazing up at the picture.

"All things considered, it is perhaps a good thing for you that he did go away, and has never been heard of, or you might not have been the heiress of Oakenhurst Manor," returned Esther, as she carefully turned the picture face to the wall once more.



C.K.

"They ran after her along the woodland path."

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## CHAPTER II.

### Lalla's Fright.

RATHER more than a week later than the incident of the picture gallery, Lalla was spending an afternoon in the woods, Esther, as usual, being in attendance.

The weather was very hot, and Esther was very sleepy; there seemed not a breath of air to stir the heavy leafage of the woods, and, after wandering about for an hour or more, the weary maid was only too thankful to sit down for a rest, with her back propped against the bole of a silver birch, whilst Lalla made wreaths of foxgloves and bracken.

Sitting at ease in the slumberous quiet of the woodland, it was not wonderful that Esther fell fast asleep, whilst Lalla, engrossed by her flowers, worked on, not even noticing the soundness of her companion's repose. From merely twining flowers and greenery into wreaths, she began to deck herself with her handiwork; then, remembering a picture she had seen

recently of a woodland nymph, instantly resolved to dress in character.

Off came her frock, for her arms must be bare. She would have taken her sandals off also, only the little fir cones and dried twigs hurt her feet so much that she decided to sacrifice truth of detail to comfort, and retain the sandals. A deftly twisted fringe of broad grasses was bound around her bare legs, a bracken wreath went round her neck, and a chaplet of dog-roses adorned her head; then making the foxgloves into a bouquet, she stole away to the stream that came tumbling down through the beech wood, in order to look at herself in the water.

So absorbed was she in this new and delightful play, that it never once occurred to her to waken Esther, or even to call out that she was going to the stream. But the rippling, broken water, when she reached it, did not make the successful mirror she had expected it to do, and she followed the course of the stream through the plantations to the oak grove, where it widened into a still, deep pool, big enough to reflect her at full length—Nature's pier-glass, a mirror in which many

a rustic belle had gazed, in order to appraise her charms. Dark clouds were gathering over the sky, but Lalla failed to notice them through the thick curtains of the summer foliage, and danced gaily on, intent on reaching the pool, so that she might judge how nearly like a woodland nymph she looked.

Disappointment awaited her, however, when at length she reached the pool; for, by reason of the heavy clouds overhead, the water was so dull and dark that it gave back but a blurred reflection of the little girl in her forest finery; and although, clinging to an over-arching bough, she leaned out, right over the water, the shadows were still too dense for her to get a clear vision of herself.

"It is really quite too bad that I can't see how nice I look, and it is impossible for me to walk all the way home without my frock," she said to herself, as she stepped backward from the edge of the water, and straightened her back from the long stooping.

Just then a dull roar of thunder rolled sonorously over the sultry woodland, and Lalla started violently, whilst a shriek of



dismay forced itself from her lips. A thunderstorm always filled her with panic, even when safely sheltered within the four walls of a house ; but to be caught like this, unprotected in the woods, inspired her with a terror akin to panic.

She turned to flee back by the way she had come, to where Esther sat asleep under the tree, with the discarded frock on the ground at her side. But, hoping to do the distance quicker by not following the winding course of the stream, Lalla struck into a narrow path that was little more than a keeper's track, along which she scudded like a frightened rabbit ; and truly, in all that wide plantation, there was no rabbit half so frightened as she. The path branched presently, and in her blind haste she took the wrong, fleeing along a track that led her with weary step farther from home.

Again the thunder crashed overhead, much nearer this time, the reverberation being followed by a vivid flash of lightning, at which the poor child shrieked aloud in her dismay. But there was no one to hear her or to succour, although a mile away Esther was shouting herself hoarse, in a vain endeavour to find her fugitive charge.



On and on rushed Lalla, not realising at first that she had missed her way ; and then, when she did discover that she was lost in the bewildering mazes of the plantations, she ran all the faster, feeling that nothing mattered in the least, if only she could get clear of the woodland before the storm grew worse. Every moment the darkness became denser, and again the thunder crashed overhead, whilst a dazzling flash of lightning momentarily blinded Lalla. Shrieking wildly, she strained every nerve to run the faster. The trees were big in this part of the wood, with long, branching arms spreading a leafy canopy overhead ; and this did but serve to increase her fear, for Esther had told her so many stories of people struck by lightning through sheltering under trees in time of storm, that to her agitated thinking, it seemed as if certain destruction were hovering over her.

Two poachers, in cowmen's smocks, who were snaring rabbits in the undergrowth, sprang up in consternation as the little girl fled shrieking past. Then, seeing that she was only a child, and a very frightened one withal, they ran after her along the woodland path, calling to her not to be afraid.

But, even if she heard, she did not stop, running and running until her strength gave out. The trees were growing thinner now, only standing here and there like sentinels, set to guard the young and tender growth from last year's falls.

Breathless with running, panting from exhaustion, and with tears running unchecked down her cheeks, Lalla came to a standstill, gazing about her in bewilderment. She did not recognise this part of the wood at all, and could not imagine where she was—which was not surprising, since the last time she passed that way the trees of the plantation had towered high above her head, standing in serried rows, whilst now there were only green bushes which scarce reached as high as her waist.

A terrific crash of thunder, and a vivid flare of lightning, sent her darting forward again, no matter where, if only the path she followed led out of the wood. The track was a fairly wide one now, with wide, deep wheel-ruts on either side, where the wood tugs had passed in the winter time bearing the felled timber away. Surely the end of the wood must come soon now! Spurred by fresh hope, Lalla hurried

forward, running when she could, and walking when the pain in her side made running too painful to be borne.

But, starting violently at a fresh crash of thunder, she had the misfortune to slip her foot into one of the deep wheel-ruts, coming to the ground with great force, striking her head against the twisted protruding root of a blackthorn bush, and spraining her ankle as she fell.

## CHAPTER III.

### In Pitiful Plight.

“THE nearest way to Oakenhurst Manor? Well, there do be a short cut through the plantations that cuts off near two miles, but you could never take it on a day like this, while the rain is coming down in bucketfuls, and the thunder crashing fit to deafen you,” said the good woman of the little wayside inn, as she took the money tendered by her customer, in payment for the bread, cheese, and ginger-beer with which he had been refreshing himself, after his long tramp from the town.

“I don’t mind a little rain. I am a sailor, and as much used to wet clothes as to dry ones; while, as to thunder, we should not think a storm like this worth talking about in the West Indies,” replied the young man, who was dressed in seafaring garb, and appeared to be not yet out of his teens.

“Be that where you’ve come from?” demanded the landlady, with the kindly curiosity of rural places.



"I have been there three times, but I've got a fresh ship now, and am off to the Canaries," he answered frankly, standing up and stretching his long limbs preparatory to his start.

"And where be they?" demanded Mrs. Jones, with a glance towards *her* canary, which was stirring restlessly in its cage.

"Oh, not very far—about half-way to Cape Town. Now, I guess you are about as wise as you were before," he responded, with a laugh; then, in a graver tone, repeated the former query about the nearest way to Oakenhurst Manor.

"Well, if so be you don't mind the rain, and are anxious to be going, step here to the door, and I will show you the turning into the wood, which isn't more than a dozen steps along the lane. It is a good four miles to the Manor, by road, but, cutting through the plantations, it isn't more than two."

As she spoke, Mrs. Jones flung a little gray shawl over her head, to protect her from the rain which was still falling fast, and stepping cautiously over the puddles by the door, went out to the middle of the road, the better to explain to the young

sailor the course he must steer in crossing the plantations.

"When you get inside the wood, you will have to trust mainly to your common sense, bearing always round to the right, for there ain't nothing to guide you, and no one of whom to inquire the way when once you get in under the trees," she said, pointing a bony finger to the narrow opening in the green hedgerow, where the path turned into the Oakenhurst plantations.

"Thank you; I daresay I shall come out all right at the other end," he said, laughing in his happy-go-lucky sailor fashion, and was turning away with an alert step, when a sharp, horrified exclamation from Mrs. Jones brought him to a sudden halt.

"What is the matter?" he demanded, in great surprise, for the good woman was backing away from him with a face full of consternation and fear.

"Sakes alive! what is that creature that's a-crawling out of your pocket?" she cried, with a shiver, as, from want of caution, she backed plump into a mud puddle, and felt the water trickling in through the weak places in her down-at-heels house shoes.

"Only a friend of mine. Come out here,

Bob, and show yourself to the lady," said the young man, putting his hand in his jacket pocket and lifting out a small brown and white Jamaica lizard, so much like a chameleon that, at the first glance, a casual observer might have mistaken it for one.

"Oh, I wouldn't touch it, no, not for a five-pound note ; it might bite or something," she said, with a frightened gesture, as he held the little creature out to her.

"Bob is too much of a gentleman to bite a lady," the sailor answered, dropping the lizard into his pocket again. Then, lifting his cap with a courteous gesture, he turned on his heel, and was speedily out of sight in the narrow lane leading to the plantations.

By the time he had gone half a mile, the rain had ceased entirely ; and he strode along, whistling a merry tune, making nothing of the copious sprinkling his feet and legs received from the tall grasses and bracken that bordered the track.

But his whistling came to a sudden stop, as a pitiful moaning cry caught his ear, and a moment later, turning round a sharp bend in the plantation track, he saw a little woe-begone figure sitting in the middle of the pathway, crying as if her heart would break.



"Hollo, what is the matter, little one?" the young man called out, in a cheery tone. "Have you lost your way?"

"Ye—e—es," sobbed the child; "and I have hurt my foot, so that I cannot walk, besides bumping my forehead so badly that the blood has been trickling down my face."

"You poor mite!" exclaimed the sailor, stooping down beside the crouching figure, and laying a kind hand on her shoulder. "Why, you are only half dressed, and soaked to the skin!"

Lalla made a brave effort to draw herself up with a dignity befitting her position in life; but it was rather a failure, and her lips were quivering pitifully as she replied, "I was playing that I was a wood-nymph—that is a sort of fairy, you know—and I—I had to take my frock off, because it had long sleeves, and, of course, no fairy would have long sleeves; then I left Esther asleep under a tree, and ran away to look at myself in the water; but it thundered badly, and I was so frightened that, in running back to Esther, I lost my way, and could not find it again."

"Who is Esther?" asked the young



sailor, standing straight up and stripping off his jacket in order to wrap it round the shoulders of the shivering child.

"She used to be my nurse, but we call her the schoolroom-maid, now that I am too big to need a nurse," Lalla answered, with a murmur of grateful thanks, as the warm, rough pilot-coat was wrapped about her.

"Then who are you?" demanded the sailor in surprise. He had, at first sight, supposed her to be the child of some farmer or gamekeeper, but this mention of a schoolroom-maid assured him that he had made a mistake in his first conclusion regarding her social status.

"I am Lalla Trevor of Oakenhurst Manor. Alicia is my real name, but it is Grannie's too, so I am always called Lalla," she answered, with quaint, old-fashioned dignity.

"A Trevor! Then you are my——" but the young man pulled himself up with a jerk, and laughed in a rather nervous fashion, as he said, in some confusion, "I mean, I must see if I can't carry you as far as the Manor, for it will never do to let a little lady like you run the risk of

a bad illness, by getting cold from your wet clothes."

"Oh, but I am so heavy, I fear you will never manage it," Lalla said protestingly.

"At least I can try. You will not object to my doing it, I hope; as in that case I shall have to leave you sitting here alone, whilst I go back to the inn yonder where I had some bread and cheese, to get someone you know to carry you, and, in the meantime, you would be catching more cold," the young man replied, not venturing to touch her without her permission, now that he knew who she was; although five minutes before he had been bundling her up in his coat, with the sympathetic kindness that it was in his nature to show to everything in trouble or distress.

"Oh, please, don't leave me alone! I was so miserable and afraid before you came; I shall be very much obliged to you if you can carry me, only I am afraid you are not strong enough," she said, with a catch in her voice that was very nearly allied to a sob.

"Ah, you don't know how strong I am," he rejoined, laughing, as he stooped and gathered her gently into his arms.

"You must try to imagine that you are a forlorn princess, whom I, a wandering knight, have rescued, at the peril of my life, from the grim fortress where you were imprisoned, and that I am fleeing with you to a city of refuge."

"What a nice play!" exclaimed Lalla, slipping one arm confidently around the neck of her rescuer, the better to maintain her balance, as he set forward at a slow, steady stride on the road to the Manor. "I am very fond of imagining things like that, because I always have to play by myself."

"Do you? Have you no brothers or sisters, or even cousins?" the young man asked, with so much pity in his face and voice that Lalla was quite surprised, it never having occurred to her before that there was any serious lack in her life.

"No, I have no one but my mother; and she is mostly too sad for playing, because my father is dead, you know. Granty and Grannie are, of course, much too old for frolics; indeed, Grannie is a great invalid, and stays in her own rooms nearly all the time."

"Your grandfather and grandmother are



old Mr. and Mrs. Trevor, I suppose?" asked the young man, with keen interest.

"Mr. Trevor and Lady Alicia Trevor. Grannie is the daughter of an earl—it is my mother who is Mrs. Trevor," corrected Lalla, with that same quaint air of dignity which had made the young man smile before.

"Indeed! I am a stranger, you see, and therefore to be forgiven when I make blunders," the sailor said, with the merry twinkle in his eyes which already had gone so far towards winning Lalla's confidence and liking.

"Of course, you could not know unless you were told; but it is very rude of me to be talking of myself, all the time. Have you a lot of brothers and sisters?" she asked, peering into the kind face of her rescuer.

"No; like you, I am alone in the world, only more so," he said, with a note of gravity in his voice which she was quick to hear.

"Haven't you even a father and mother?" she inquired compassionately.

"My mother died when I was a little chap, and I can't find my father," he replied.



"Why, what do you mean?" demanded the child, in great surprise. "Did he run away from you, or something?"

"Not exactly that, but he went a journey once, and never came back," the sailor said soberly.

"Perhaps he is dead too," she said, dropping her voice almost to a whisper out of sheer sympathy.

"I don't think so. I never let myself think so. I always try to believe that I shall happen across him some day, just when I least expect it. But what are you looking at me so hard for?" His tone was lighter as he put the query, for he did not want to sadden the child with the shadow brooding over his own life.

"I was thinking I had seen you before somewhere. Do you think I have?" she asked, wrinkling her forehead in a puzzled frown, for certainly the young man's face had a very familiar look; whilst even his voice sounded like one that she had heard before, although, try as she would, she could not piece his identity together with any satisfaction to herself.

"I don't think you have, for I was never in this part of the country before. My

home—when I had one—was in Plymouth, and that is a long way from here.”

“I know!” she interposed quickly, with a childish delight in airing her information. “It is a seaport on the coast of Devon.”

“Right you are, and a very big and wonderful place it is, different to the sleepy towns and little lost villages inland,” he said, with a laugh.

“The villages are not lost—they all know where they are,” she corrected him, with a little shake of her head, which was still adorned with the chaplet of dog-roses, very drooping and damp; matted, too, with the still damper hair, that would entail a painful combing process later on.

“Do they? Well, that is a very good thing, for I am sure no one else does. At least, I have lost my way more times than I can count to-day, in trying to find my road from village to village.”

“Do you live in Plymouth now—I mean, when you are at home?” Lalla asked, after a minute’s silence. The plantation track led uphill now, and the sailor had very little breath to spare for talking.

“I don’t live anywhere, in the sense of having a home, that is. I am a sailor, you

know, and am mostly on board ship, going from port to port; or if I happen to have a week or two of holiday, I spend it in going walking trips inland. It is a cheap way of travelling, and is more bearable than a fusty lodging in some big town."

"But how dreadful not to have a home anywhere! I have lived at the Manor almost ever since I can remember; and I suppose it will always be my home, as I shall be the lady of Oakenhurst Manor, when Granty dies, unless——"

"Unless what?" asked the young man eagerly.

"That is a family secret, and I must not talk about it," rejoined Lalla, in a solemn and mysterious tone. "But if I am the lady of the Manor, I mean to be a very good, kind mistress, and I won't let the poor old people be taken away to the workhouse, when they are old and worn-out. It made me dreadfully sorry when old Mrs. Tompkins was taken away to the workhouse. I was out walking with Esther that morning, and we saw the fly come for the poor old woman. She cried, and her daughters cried, a lot of the neighbours were crying, and I did a little weep too."



"It must have been quite affecting," the young man said sympathetically, turning his head quickly so that Lalla might not catch the twinkle in his eyes; then, catching sight of a big building looming up through the thinning trees, he asked hurriedly, "Is that house yonder Oakenhurst Manor?"

"Yes; oh, I am glad we are so near home, for I am sure your arms must be aching dreadfully. This path will lead us round through the shrubberies straight to the front entrance," Lalla said, with a sigh of relief, for despite the thick pilot-coat in which she was wrapped, her damp garments made her feel chill and uncomfortable, whilst her sprained ankle was beginning to hurt horribly.

"The front entrance? Isn't there some back-door I could carry you to?" the sailor asked, with an accent of dismay.

"The back-doors are all round on the farther side of the house, and we should have to skirt the tennis-lawn and the rosary," she answered wearily; and he, seeing how white and exhausted she looked, made no more demur, but strode on with a quick, firm step, his face setting into stern, rigid lines, as the path through the



shrubbery ended abruptly in the carriage-drive, almost close to the stately front entrance.

Mounting the steps, he gripped his burden a little tighter with one arm, and momentarily freeing the other hand, he pulled the great bell chain with such a vigorous jerk, that it clanged loudly, sending its echoes all through the quiet house.

The old butler himself hurried to open the door, under the impression that some very grand personage had arrived ; and was startled and scandalised at being confronted by a coatless young man, who thrust a big bundle into his arms, saying with breathless haste, "Your young lady has hurt herself, and I have brought her home ;" then, turning quickly, the sailor ran down the steps, disappearing into the shrubbery path.

## CHAPTER IV.

### Why did he go?

“WHY, he never said good-bye to me—  
did not even tell me his name!”  
exclaimed Lalla, in great distress, mingled  
with chagrin.

“Miss Lalla!” cried the solemn butler,  
with such a violent start of amazement that  
he almost dropped her on the door-mat; for  
he had been too much bewildered by the  
unceremonious manner in which the bundle  
had been thrust into his arms to recognise  
her at the first glance, “whatever have you  
been doing to yourself, miss?”

But Lalla broke into stormy wailing,  
sobbing from misery, pain, and disappoint-  
ment. A maid-servant, hearing the noise,  
came running into the hall, speedily followed  
by more maids, and Mrs. Trevor, who was  
becoming keenly anxious at the long-con-  
tinued absence of her daughter and Esther,  
though she had tried to console herself with  
the thought that they had taken shelter  
somewhere from the storm.

"My darling, what is the matter, and where have you been? Why, you are soaking wet, and have no frock on!" said Mrs. Trevor, looking as bewildered as the rest.

But Lalla sobbed on, saying things in jerky, incoherent gasps, which no one could understand.

"He never said good-bye—oh, it was too bad—and he hasn't even got a coat, because he gave it me as I was so cold—and I've hurt my foot."

"You poor little dear!" said the upper-housemaid sympathetically, almost crying herself, for Lalla was a great favourite with the servants. Then she began to draw the rough pilot-coat away from the child's sodden, clinging garments, but sprang up suddenly with a wild shriek of alarm.

The other maids screamed too; the butler moved hastily a step farther into the back-ground; and even Mrs. Trevor looked apprehensive, as a brown head was poked out of a pocket of the coat in which Lalla was wrapped, and the bright-eyed lizard looked about it with an inquisitive air, as if wondering what had become of its master.

"What a sweet little creature! Oh, mother, what is it?" cried Lalla, forgetting

all her pain and discomfort, as she put out an impulsive hand to grasp the lizard.

"Don't, Miss Lalla, don't touch the horrid little thing; perhaps it will bite you," screamed the upper-housemaid.

"Be careful, my darling, it is strange to you, and, besides, we do not know that it is harmless," Mrs. Trevor interposed.

"I don't hold with zoological animals myself," murmured the butler, retreating still farther into the background; and being too intent on escaping from the dangerous proximity to heed where he was going, brought his head with a tremendous crack against the protruding corner of the carved oaken balustrade.

Lalla had no fear, however, and held out her hand so coaxingly to the lizard, that the little creature, divining her intentions to be friendly, ran up her arm, and nestled confidingly on her neck.

"Oh, Mother, what a darling it is! May I keep it for my very own?" cried Lalla, with a pink flush of excitement in the cheeks which had been so pale before.

"But I don't understand where it came from; and, my dear child, before I hear a word more of explanation, I must get



you out of these wet clothes, and into a warm bed," Mrs. Trevor said, conscious of the risk Lalla was running by remaining in her drenched garments.

Whilst this was being done, Esther came tearing into the house, almost beside herself with terror, declaring that Miss Lalla must have been run off with by poachers, as she and the gamekeepers had been scouring the woods in search of her for more than two hours, but could find no trace of her in any direction.

"Miss Lalla is safe upstairs, and being put to bed by her mother," began cook, and would have gone on to explain the condition in which the child had been brought home, but Esther gave her no opportunity, bursting out instead in agitated tones—

"Oh, how could she serve me such a trick as to run away home, when I just dropped asleep for a few minutes under a tree? I can tell you I was in a most dreadful fright when the thunder woke me up, and I found she was gone. Home was the very last place that I thought of looking for her, but I got the keepers to help me search the big wood and the

spinneys. We were hunting and shouting through all that storm, and I'm wet to the skin, while I feel that bad, I can't describe," panted the girl, who was not very strong, and had, moreover, been frightened nearly out of her senses.

"Miss Lalla didn't run home. She got lost in the plantations, and fell down, spraining her ankle; then a strange man found her, rolled her up in his coat, and brought her every step of the way home in his arms," said cook, pouring out a cup of very hot tea for the exhausted Esther.

"He must have had pretty strong arms, then, for Miss Lalla is no light weight now, though she is not very big. It is a good step from the plantations to the house—over a mile, I am sure," said Esther, sipping the hot tea with infinite relish.

"That is what I said; he must have uncommonly strong arms," went on cook; "but Simpson said he was quite a young man, hardly more than a boy; and when the door was opened in answer to his ring—which was loud enough to wake the seven sleepers, whoever they may be—he just

thrust Miss Lalla into Simpson's arms, with no more ceremony than if she had been a bundle of old clothes; then, turning round, ran down the steps, and bolted as if he'd done something wrong, leaving his coat behind him."

"It looks queer, his running away like that," said Esther.

"So Simpson said; and it was just heart-breaking to hear Miss Lalla cry, because the young man went away without bidding her good-bye; they couldn't pacify her, until a horrid little wild beast crawled out of a pocket in the jacket he had left behind."

"A wild beast?" queried Esther doubtfully.

"Something of the sort—a cammy lion, Simpson said he thought it was—for he had seen one something like it once before in a public near the docks at London. But you are shivering as if you had caught an ague. Go and get off your wet things, and creep into bed; then I'll send you up a cup of hot soup to put you in a glow, or by to-morrow morning you will be too stiff to lift your hand to your head."

"I must go to my mistress first; is she



very angry with me?" asked Esther, whose teeth were chattering as well from fear as from cold.

"No; Miss Lalla has kept sticking to it that it was entirely her fault that she went away from you and got lost, and Mrs. Trevor is more reasonable than most ladies. But I don't say that you may not get it hot when the affair comes to the ears of the Squire. It may even end in your having to leave, so don't say I haven't warned you," said cook, who was rather a Job's comforter.

"That is what I have been afraid of ever since I woke up and found Miss Lalla gone. I can't think what made me drop so sound asleep, unless it was the storm coming up that made the air so heavy," Esther replied, tears coming into her eyes and rolling down her cheeks. She had been very happy at the Manor, and it would have been hard to leave in any case, but to be sent away in disgrace would be a shame intolerable to be borne. Then she burst out suddenly, "I wonder who that young man could be! Was he a poacher, do you expect, and so afraid to face the Squire to be thanked and rewarded?"



"More likely that than not. Plainly he had something to be ashamed of, or he wouldn't have run away in that fashion," retorted cook indifferently, caring very little about what became of the rescuer, so long as the child whom he brought home suffered no ill effects from the adventure. "But if you don't go to bed sharp, my girl, you will find yourself in for a bout of rheumatic fever, or something equally unpleasant; and that will be a deal worse to bear than any scolding the Squire can give you. 'Hard words break no bones,' you know."

"No, but they hurt so bad sometimes that I believe the pain of a broken bone would be quite as easy to bear," Esther said bitterly, then caught hold of a chair, looking as if she would faint away there and then, as the soft rustle of a dress sounded in the passage outside, and Mrs. Trevor entered the kitchen.

"Mary told me that you had come home, and that you had been searching for Lalla all this time," said the lady, in her gentle tones.

Esther began to sob in a hysterical fashion, quite unable to utter a word of explanation

or self-defence ; and it was cook who had to tell Mrs. Trevor how the girl had been roused from her slumber by the thunder to find her charge missing, and how she and the keepers had been scouring the woods ever since.

"I know, and I am very sorry you have had such a fright. Lalla is very sorry too, for it was both naughty and foolish of her to wander away from you in such a fashion, and without a frock too," the lady said kindly ; but at the mention of the garment Esther gave a start of dismay.

"I had forgotten about the frock, though the first sight of it nearly made my heart stop beating with fear, and it is just lying out there in the woods for anyone that comes along to pick up and make off with."

"Never mind the frock. It must be pretty well spoiled by this time, being left out on the ground in such a storm. Go and get to bed as quickly as you can, and do not trouble about anything, or you will be ill to-morrow," Mrs. Trevor said, then went away as gently and quietly as she had come ; while Esther broke into another fit of hysterical sobbing from sheer relief and

thankfulness that her mistress had not scolded her, and was hauled off to bed by two of her fellow-servants, being much too excited and exhausted to take care of herself.

Meanwhile, Lalla was lying snugly tucked up in her little white bed, with the lizard nestled in a warm nook under her pillow; and she was wondering, with all her might, why it was that the stranger who had been so kind to her should have gone away in such an abrupt fashion, without even troubling to say good-bye to her, or to claim the coat in which she had been wrapped. But, try as she would, she could find no solution to the mystery; and being worn out by all that she had gone through, fell presently into a heavy slumber, lasting for many hours, while the summer night dropped down in a brooding hush over the thickly-wooded country about Oakenhurst Manor, until the birds began to twitter and stir in the trees, and a faint glow in the east betokened the dawn of a new day.

Then Lalla began to dream, and in her dream she was walking up and down the long picture-gallery, dressed out in her

grandmother's rustling gown of moire antique. Up and down the long gallery she went, whirling and twirling her sweeping silken skirts, until at length, catching sight of the half-open door of the almost forgotten room at the end of the gallery, she turned into it, and walked up to the picture which had hung so long with its face to the wall.

Some unseen hand appeared to turn it for her, and as she stood gazing at the dark, handsome face of the son who had angered his father, and been turned adrift, she gave a start of recognition, and cried out so sharply that she awoke to find herself in her own white bed, with the gray light of early dawn stealing in at the windows.



## CHAPTER V.

### In the Dawning.

SQUIRE TREVOR had been from home on the day of Lalla's adventure in the wood, not returning until late, when he heard from his daughter-in-law of the child being brought home by a kindly, but eccentric, stranger, who had not even stayed to reclaim his coat, or the pet lizard, which had its abode in one pocket.

"A lizard! Why, that is a sort of snake, isn't it?" demanded the Squire, with a nervous start. He was by no means great at natural history, and in his own mind classed lizards with boa-constrictors, cobras, and other deadly and dangerous reptiles.

"Lizards are mostly harmless. I am sure this one is," said Mrs. Trevor, "for, from its colour, I judge it to be one of those little Jamaica lizards, such as my poor Raymond had as pets at one time. Most friendly and affectionate little creatures they were too, and they would come when called, eating from my husband's hand like dormice."

"Ugh!" ejaculated the Squire, "I just loathe creeping things. Have you had the doctor to see Lalla?"

"Yes, he came at once, and says with care the sprained ankle will be well in a week or two; the chief harm to be feared being the chill from her wet clothes—but we shall see more about that to-morrow," Mrs. Trevor said, as brightly as she could, being anxious not to rouse the fears, or excite the ire of the Squire that night, although she was suffering not a little secret apprehension concerning that same danger of chill, and in her heart was blessing the sailor for his goodness in wrapping his thick warm jacket about the shivering body of the child.

"The monkey! to go wandering about half-clothed in such a fashion! I tell you what it is, Amy; she shall have a dog, the best and most faithful to be bought for money, and then if she gets lost, the animal can bring her home, since a good dog may always be trusted to know its way about;" and having delivered himself of this ultimatum, the Squire took up his candle, and went away to his room, leaving his daughter-in-law much relieved by the quiet way in which he had taken the news.

Then she also retired for the night, sharing Lalla's room, as was her custom.

Her anxiety on the little girl's account kept her from sleeping for a long time ; and even when she did fall into a troubled slumber, she kept rousing with a start, thinking that Lalla called to her.

Presently, when dawn drew near, her repose became more profound, and she was very fast asleep indeed when Lalla, starting up from her very vivid dream, called out in excited tones, "Mother! Mother! I've found him out! and I know now who it is that my sailor is like."

The ringing voice of her child awoke Mrs. Trevor, who, in the first confusion of her sudden recall from deep sleep, decided that Lalla was delirious, and slipping quickly from her bed, endeavoured to soothe the little girl into quiet again.

"Hush, darling! Lie down. Nothing will hurt you, for mother is here; and see, I will give you something nice to drink."

"I'm not thirsty, thank you, or frightened either ; but I have just remembered who that nice sailor man was like, and I wanted to tell you before I forgot again. Did you mind being waked up in such a hurry, Mummy?"



"No, dearie ; I was only afraid that you were feverish and ill," replied Mrs. Trevor, who had by this time succeeded in satisfying herself that the colour in Lalla's cheeks was the natural rosy hue of a healthy awakening from sleep, and not a fever flush at all.

"Oh, I am not ill a bit, thank you, Mother, only my foot is stiff and sore ; but I've been dreaming about Uncle Edward, and then I remembered that my sailor was just exactly like him," Lalla said, nodding her head with great vigour.

"But, Lalla, you have never seen your Uncle Edward," Mrs. Trevor replied, in great surprise, beginning to worry anew lest she was mistaken, and that Lalla might, after all, be wandering in delirium.

"Yes, I have—I mean I have seen his picture—and he was about the nicest-looking man I have ever seen, except the sailor who brought me home, and they are as much alike as if they were brothers," the little girl asserted, with another sage wag of her head, with its tumbled golden hair.

"I have never seen it. I did not even know there was a portrait of him in the house," admitted Mrs. Trevor, in surprise.

"There is a big picture that always hangs



with its face to the wall, in a little room opening from the picture-gallery. Esther said it was my Uncle Edward, and turned it round for me to look at," explained Lalla.

"That little room at the end of the gallery? Oh, Lalla, did you go in there?" exclaimed Mrs. Trevor, in a tone of dismayed surprise.

"Yes; was it wrong? The door was a little way open, and we both went in—Esther, and I—there was no one to tell us that we must not go."

"The door was open, you say? How very strange! Your grandfather must have gone into it, and forgotten to shut the door when he came out again. Why, I have never heard of that door being opened in all the years since I have lived here," Mrs. Trevor said, in a solemn, hushed tone, as if she were speaking of some house or room where the dead lay awaiting burial.

"Won't you tell me all about it, Mummy dear," coaxed Lalla; "I am not the least bit sleepy now, and if you come into my bed with me, you won't be cold."

Mrs. Trevor crept into the bed beside her daughter, for the summer dawn was

chill. "I suppose you will hear the whole story some day, and you might as well hear it from me as from anyone else; but it is not a pleasant tale," she said, as she laid her head on the pillow, and Lalla crept into her arms.

"Never mind if it isn't a happy story, Mother. It is sure to be interesting, seeing that it is all about my own people. Esther told me a little, all that she knew, I suppose. She said that grandfather wanted to marry Uncle Edward to a lady whom uncle did not like, and so they quarrelled, and uncle went away, never to be heard of again."

"Yes, that is the story, all of it that leaked out to the world; but there was bitter strife and unbridled passion behind—so I have heard, for it all happened before I was married—indeed, your father was only a youth at Sandhurst at the time. Edward and his father had a terribly stormy interview in that little room where you saw the turned picture, and which was used by Edward as a painting-room, for he was an artist. From words, the two came to blows. The Squire struck his son, and, in mad anger, the son raised his hand against his own father, felling him to the ground."

"Oh, how dreadful!" murmured Lalla.

"Yes, it was dreadful; almost too bad to be spoken of, save in the way of warning to those who come after. But such sins always carry their own punishment; only the pity of it is, that the innocent suffer as well as the guilty."

"What innocent people have suffered because Granty and Uncle Edward quarrelled?" demanded Lalla, with wide-open eyes.

"Grannie certainly was innocent, but that quarrel turned her into an almost broken-hearted invalid; and she has just hung on to life ever since, in the hope that some day before she dies, God will let her see her son again," Mrs. Trevor said, with a quiver of pity in her tones for the poor lady who had suffered so greatly.

"Would Granty forgive Uncle Edward if he came back now?" asked Lalla quickly.

"I don't know; sometimes I think he would, and then again when he gets angry I am afraid he would not—though, of course, they were both to blame, and if the Squire had not struck his son, the son would not have raised his hand against his father." Mrs. Trevor shivered as she spoke, for her gentle nature had always shrank in fear from



the angry violence so often displayed by her father-in-law.

“Mother, will you tell Grannie what I have told you?” cried Lalla, starting up from her pillow. “I mean, about my sailor man being so like Uncle Edward.”

“No, no ; it would be too cruel. Besides, don’t you remember telling me that the young man had lost his father, and could not find him. Now, supposing this sailor to be Edward’s son—a possible, though not a probable thing, since the likeness might be nothing but a coincidence—just think how poor Grannie would suffer at the uncertainty of his fate.”

“Poor Grannie !” murmured Lalla. Then in a brisker tone she asked, “And won’t you tell Granty either?”

“Yes, I must tell him, because he may want to trace the young man, if only to ascertain whether he is a Trevor or no. It will not be an easy task ; but I shall screw my courage up, and get it over directly after breakfast.”

“Mother, shall I do it for you? Granty is never angry with me?”

“No, dear ; I think it would hurt his self-respect that a little girl like you should



“speak to him of such a matter. Elderly people are very sensitive about some things, and I could not bear that Granty’s feelings should be wounded.”

“What a dear, thoughtful little mother it is!” cried Lalla, with a loving hug. Then she dropped back on her pillow with a weary sigh, “What a long time it will be until breakfast, and I am so tired of lying here.”

“You mean you want something to eat, I expect,” rejoined her mother, with a laugh; and, slipping out of bed, she stepped into the next room, bringing from thence a glass of milk, which had been standing all night in a basin of ice; a plate of strawberries, and some biscuits, a dainty first breakfast for the little girl who, so sorely against her will, was for the time compelled to play the part of an invalid.

Lalla struggled to a sitting posture among her pillows, the better to enjoy the little repast, whilst the bright-eyed lizard crept out from its snug nest under the bolster, in order to discover what new diversion was to the fore.

“Oh, Mummy, look at the dear pet. Could it eat some of the biscuit crumbs, do you think?”

"Insects are its proper food. We must take it down to the hot-houses ; there will be abundant scope for it there," Mrs. Trevor said, as, wrapped in a dressing-gown, she sat beside the bed watching Lalla eating the strawberries.

At this moment a fly, which had been aimlessly buzzing about the room, attracted by the smell of the fruit, swooped down upon it ; but almost before it had settled, the lizard's long tongue darted from its mouth, and the fate of that fly was decided beyond all chance of dispute.

"What a clever little creature !" exclaimed Lalla, though she had shuddered at the speedy sepulture of the unfortunate fly. "Do lizards like anything else, besides eating insects and being kept warm, Mother ?"

"Your father's lizards were fond of music, and he had a little old mandoline that he used to play for their especial amusement, and it was most funny to see how they enjoyed it."

"I wish I had a mandoline ; what became of the one my father had ?" asked Lalla, stretching out her arm for the lizard to run up to her shoulder.

“I have it still, and will get it out for you after breakfast. But now, dearie, I think you ought to lie down and go to sleep again, for it is only five o'clock.”

Nothing loth, Lalla curled down on her pillows, and was soon fast asleep ; whilst the lizard, tucked away in the warm bend of her shoulder, slumbered also, dreaming perhaps of the fly it had swallowed.

But Mrs. Trevor remained wide awake, thinking of the ordeal before her.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A Surprise for the Squire.

MRS. TREVOR took her place at the breakfast-table with a beating heart. Gentle and quiet though she was, she was by no means deficient in courage; but it was not so much fear of the irate old Squire which made her quail this morning, as a sensitive reluctance to give him pain; and she shrank instinctively against dragging open the old wounds, that had smarted through so many weary years.

The Squire chanced to be in a particularly amiable frame of mind, the fact that Lalla showed no symptoms of having taken cold being especially comforting to him; for his own two daughters had died of consumption whilst still in their teens, and he was always worrying if his grand-daughter had the least little cough or cold.

“Plainly, Amy, the child is a chip off the old block, and takes after me, for there has never been any lung weakness on my side of the house, though Lady Alicia’s family have



been consumptive for generations past," he said, rubbing his hands with great glee as he took his place at table.

"Lalla does not take cold easily; but I think what saved her from taking a chill yesterday was the wisdom of that young sailor in wrapping her up in his coat. I am indeed deeply indebted to him," replied the little lady, sitting behind the silver coffee-pot, with a beating heart and fluttering pulses.

"So am I!" responded the Squire, helping himself to broiled kidneys, and commencing on his breakfast with an evident air of enjoyment. Then a thought struck him, and he turned to the vigilant Simpson, who hovered behind his chair, asking, "By the way, has the fellow come back for his coat yet?"

"No, sir," replied that functionary, and said no more, having caught a glance of warning from his mistress, which made him leave unuttered various dark suspicions and theories which he cherished concerning a man who was afraid to remain and claim a coat that was plainly his own property; unless, indeed, he had stolen it.

"That is funny," remarked the Squire, in a musing tone; "for even if the fellow had

been so modest as to refuse a reward that he was plainly entitled to, it is queer that he should be willing to part with his coat. What sort of a man was he, Simpson?"

The butler instinctively glanced at Mrs. Trevor for instruction, and catching again that look of warning, answered stolidly, "I cannot describe him, sir; I was taken unawares."

"I should think you must have been, if you can't remember something of what he was like," said the Squire sarcastically, and then became again absorbed in his breakfast.

Meanwhile, from the other end of the table, Mrs. Trevor had by a silent sign communicated to the butler her desire that he should leave the room; and, catching up a dish that should serve as an excuse, the well-trained servant glided noiselessly away, closing the door behind him—and the dreaded moment had come.

"Where has Simpson gone?" demanded the Squire, a moment later. He always looked upon the butler as his own peculiar attendant, and if there were guests at table, then the parlour-maid had to come in and help wait, leaving Simpson to look after his master.

"I sent him away because I wanted to talk to you quite alone. I will wait upon you if you need anything," replied Mrs. Trevor, in a tremulous tone.

"Why not leave it until breakfast is over?" asked the Squire in surprise.

"Because I wanted to have my talk with you before you went to see Grannie," she answered, for it was his invariable custom to spend the first half-hour after breakfast in reading his letters to his invalid wife.

"Is there anything wrong—with the child, I mean?" he asked apprehensively, struck by the gravity of her tone.

"No; it is nothing to do with Lalla—not directly, at least; it is about the man who brought her home," said Mrs. Trevor, with a little gasp, wondering how she should manage to get out her next words.

"Well, what of him?" The Squire's tone was mystified, but from the roused attention of his face, it was plain that his curiosity was excited.

"He was a very young man, hardly more than a boy, but Lalla tells me that he was the image of your son Edward, and that his voice reminded her of yours."

"Edward!" echoed the old man, letting



his knife and fork clatter unheeded on to his plate, whilst he leaned back in his chair, with a strange, gray look on his face, which frightened his companion.

She rose at once from her place at the other end of the table, and came to stand beside him, gathering his limp, trembling hands into her own with a movement of dumb sympathy, which somehow eased the aching of his heart, caused through the unexpected stirring of the old sorrow.

"Father, I did not mean to hurt or grieve you, but I had to tell you myself, for someone else might have seen him—this sailor, I mean—who, noticing the likeness, might speak to you about it, and you all unprepared for the surprise," she said, her voice fluttering from the agitation of her heart.

"Thank you," he murmured faintly, then sat silent a moment to recover the shock, whilst Mrs. Trevor held his hands still clasped in her own.

"How did Lalla know he was like Edward; she has never seen her uncle?" queried the Squire abruptly, when he had, to use his own expression, "got his breath again."



"She was playing in the picture-gallery one day, a little while ago, one of the maids being with her, when she discovered the panel door of the painting-room was open, and not knowing that it was forbidden ground, went in from sheer curiosity, for until then she did not even know that there was a room there; then the turned picture caught her eye, and she told the maid in attendance to move it for her to see. I knew nothing of the occurrence then. Lalla said she did not even remember it herself, until last night, when she dreamed she was in the painting-room again; and seeing the picture once more, instantly recognised its likeness to her kind friend of yesterday." Mrs. Trevor was braver now, and could speak without trembling.

"It may be nothing but an accidental resemblance, for remember, it was not strong enough for her to recall at the time who the stranger was like," objected the Squire, an obstinate inflection coming into his tone, as if he did not choose to be convinced, though his hands were still trembling, and he had the bowed, shaken look of one who has sustained a severe shock.

"Lalla was frightened, miserable, and in pain, too occupied with her own wretchedness to pay much heed to anything else ; yet in her sleep, when the brain was freed from its waking activity, the clue of the likeness was gathered up and made clear to her in her dreams."

"Dreams are mostly nonsense !" the Squire exclaimed impatiently.

"Very often they are ; but there was reason in this one, I think—especially when we remember the very peculiar conduct of this young sailor, who strides up to the hall-door and rings a peal at the bell that resounds through the whole house ; then when Simpson rushes to fling the door wide under the impression that at the very least it is the duke who has come to call, stuffs Lalla into his arms, coat and all, and runs away."

There was so much conviction in Mrs. Trevor's tone, and so much reason in her arguments, that the Squire dissented no more, only sat staring out through the window, with eyes that saw nothing at all of green lawn or blue sky, their gaze being turned to the chambers of memory.

"I must have left that panel door ajar, when I went up there a week or ten days

ago. It locks by being closed, and I expect I forgot it. I went up there to look at his picture; but though I stayed there an hour or more, I came away without having mustered the courage to turn it round," he said presently, speaking as much to himself as to his companion. Then he asked in a different tone, "Did this young sailor make any mention of his family, or—or of his father?"

"Yes; he said that he had no brothers or sisters, that his mother was dead—had been dead for years, I believe—and that his father was lost."

"Lost!" ejaculated the Squire, with a bewildered look; "what did he mean?"

"He said that a long time ago his father went a journey from which he had never returned, but he—the son, I mean—would not allow himself to believe that his father was dead, and confidently expected to happen upon him at some time in the course of his wanderings."

"I wish I had seen him! Whatever could Simpson have been about to let him get clear away like that?" exclaimed the Squire testily.

"Simpson was too much surprised at the



manner in which the bundle was thrust into his arms, to have his wits about him, I suspect," Mrs. Trevor said, with a faint smile. "Besides, he has only been in the family for a dozen years or so, therefore the likeness to Edward, however strong it might have been, would have had no meaning for him."

"No, but it would for Parker, if she had come upon the scene; and if this young man was a Trevor, and did not care to be recognised, his running off without his coat was a very natural action. Dear me, dear me!" and the old man rose from his chair, and began to pace the room in uncontrollable agitation.

But Mrs. Trevor had a word of warning to give him that must be spoken without delay. "Grannie must not be told of this; unless, indeed, we find the young man again. It would be too cruel," she said softly.

The Squire stopped in his walk and looked at her, as if failing to comprehend the necessity for keeping Lady Alicia in ignorance on the subject.

"His father was lost, you know," she went on, dropping her voice almost to a whisper; "Grannie would only grieve afresh over this new and aggravated uncertainty."



He nodded, then took another turn or two up and down the room, finally coming to a stand in front of his daughter-in-law again. "What shall I do, Amy? I can't go into her room just yet; I must quiet down a little, or she will guess at the first look into my face that I had heard news of some sort, and it might bring on one of those dreadful heart attacks."

"I will go and read the paper for Grannie, and any letters that may interest her. I can say, and truly, that business is keeping you for a little while; because, of course, you will endeavour to trace this young man, if only for the sake of satisfying yourself concerning him."

"Yes, but suppose he does not care to be traced?"

Mrs. Trevor smiled. "At least a coatless man should not be hard to find; and if, when found, he turns out to be other than what we think, then five pounds, or even ten, will not be too big a reward for his goodness to Lalla. But if our theory is right, you can take your own way of giving him his due."

The Squire frowned. "Don't talk nonsense, Amy! There is your child to be thought of."

"I am thinking of her," asserted Mrs. Trevor, clasping her hands tightly from sheer nervousness, whilst a crimson spot of excitement glowed in either pale cheek. "Lalla will not be penniless in any case ; but even if she were compelled to earn her bread by toil of hand or brain, I would rather she should do it, than inherit wealth to the exclusion of another to whom it naturally and morally belongs."

The Squire made no reply beyond an impatient ejaculation, then left the room hastily, as he went brushing against Mrs. Parker, the housekeeper, who was coming towards the door with a scared look on her face, and something held carefully covered up in one hand.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A Silent Witness.

"CAN I speak to you for a minute, if you please, ma'am?" asked Mrs. Parker, appearing at the door of the breakfast-room.

"Certainly, Parker; come into my sitting-room, will you; we shall not be interrupted there," said Mrs. Trevor, leading the way to her own private sitting-room on the other side of the hall, and guessing from the look on the housekeeper's face that the matter to be discussed was of considerable importance.

"I wanted to speak about this, ma'am; I found it in the pocket of the coat in which Miss Lalla was brought home," Mrs. Parker said, tendering a much worn clasp-knife for inspection.

Mrs. Trevor reached out her hand and took it with fingers that trembled a little, despite her effort at outward calm. "Yes?" she queried nervously, instinctively knowing that in this old knife lay some clue to the

identity of the young stranger, who was so like the turned picture in that closed room upstairs.

"It is the knife I gave to Master Edward more years ago than I can count, when he was a boy at school, and just about the time when I came here to live after my poor husband was killed," Mrs. Parker said, with a little, half-strangled sob. Her history, poor soul! had been tragic, for her husband had been shot in an encounter with poachers in the Oakenhurst woods.

"Are you sure?" asked Mrs. Trevor quietly.

"Quite sure, ma'am. Master Edward had been opening a box for me with his knife, and broke the blade in doing it. He said, laughingly, that he would have to wait a month before buying another, because he had spent all his pocket-money, and his father would not let him have any more until it was due. So I bought him one with my money, and I had engraved on it the letters, 'E. T. from S. P.'—and there they are, ma'am, still plain to be seen," she said, pointing to the plate which was let into the black horn handle of the knife.



"Then you think——?" began Mrs. Trevor, but stopped short because she absolutely did not know how to put her idea into words.

"It was not Mr. Edward himself, ma'am," interposed the housekeeper quickly; "for this man was young—'an impudent young fellow,' Simpson called him—but then, he has not served the family long, and would not know if there was any likeness. If only I had chanced to see him myself, I should have been so thankful, for I have a feeling that it might have been Mr. Edward's son."

A moment Mrs. Trevor took silent counsel with herself; then, resolving to take this old and faithful servant into her confidence, she said slowly, "There was a very strong likeness, Parker. Lalla saw it, and spoke of it to me; and the young man's voice reminded her of the Squire's."

With an ejaculation of mingled thankfulness and amazement, Parker sat down heavily on the nearest chair; she apologised afterwards, but declared that for the moment she was too overcome to be aware of what she was doing.

"Perhaps that was why he went away without staying for his coat. He would have

heard from his father of the trouble in the family, and was too proud to even accept a thank-you from the house to which he belonged," said the old woman, with tears coursing down her face.

She sobbed bitterly on hearing what Lalla had told her mother of the young man's father being lost—for she, like poor Lady Alicia, had always clung to the hope that, some day, the quarrel would be healed, and the breach between the Squire and his son bridged over—but now, if Edward was lost, perhaps dead, and lying in an unknown grave, that hope was at an end for ever.

The days that followed were fraught with anxiety for some in the household. The Squire had advertised in the daily and county papers for the young man who had so timely come to the succour of his granddaughter; he had sought the aid of the police in tracing him, but all to no avail. The young man had disappeared completely; and when the weeks passed on, bringing no word or trace of him, the Squire was fain to believe that the silence was intentional, and that his son's son refused to hold any intercourse with the family to whom he belonged.

Meanwhile, a dog had been procured as a playfellow and companion for Lalla—a big, handsome blood-hound, tan in colour, deepening to black down the spine, a beautiful creature, bold as a lion and gentle as a lamb. Lalla fell in love with the animal upon her first introduction to it, and promptly gave it the name of Boom, because of its deep and resonant baying.

A large amount of outdoor liberty was allowed to the little girl during those golden weeks of summer; for, although she had taken no perceptible cold from her wetting, her foot was a long time in getting well; and she had a thin, fragile appearance, which frightened those who loved her best, causing them, for the time at least, to disregard every consideration saving that of health.

“Let her run about barefoot, like the children of the Scottish poor,” said the great physician from London, who was called in to say why Lalla was not rosy and plump like other children at her age. “No, not sandals—I do not believe in them; children should either have proper shoes, or none at all. In the country, in summer-time, they are better with only Nature’s covering. There is a phosphorus in the earth, my



dear madam, which is only communicated to the human frame through the soles of the feet; cover the feet and you lose the phosphorus, that is obvious." So saying, the big man pocketed his fee—which was, of course, in proportion to his reputation—and went away, leaving Mrs. Trevor to carry out his instructions with reference to the banishment of Lalla's shoes and stockings: though, indeed, she rarely did wear any in the summer-time, mostly contenting herself with sandals.

It took a few days of barefootedness before the soles of her feet became hard enough to make a stroll along a gravel path a pleasure; but when once that condition had been reached, there was no happier little girl than Lalla in all the countryside, as—with her father's old mandoline slung over her shoulder; the lizard, which she had named Jewel because of its bright eyes, tucked away on her neck under the cape of her sun-bonnet; and Boom for companion and body-guard rolled into one—she went for rambles in the park and plantations surrounding the Manor, or lay basking in the sunshine in the gardens of the terrace walk.



There was one drawback to her pleasure, however, and that lay in Boom's dislike to music, and his melancholy protest against the infliction. It was in vain that she tinkled out the prettiest airs, singing as sweetly as a lark; and whilst Jewel listened with an appearance of the keenest delight, Boom would always throw up his great head with a gesture of tragic despair, and howl in such a weird, mournful fashion that Lalla was fain to cease from her own performance, and put her fingers in her ears.

"Do you think he really hates music so much, or is it done just to show that he can make a noise too?" Lalla asked her mother one day, when Mrs. Trevor happened to be present to hear Boom's long-drawn, dolorous howls.

"I fancy that Boom's ear for music is defective, and when he sings he does not keep in tune," laughed her mother. "There is nothing in his appearance to suggest that he dislikes it, only that a spirit of emulation induces him to do his best in the same line also."

"In that case there is, of course, no more to be said, and so we must try to make the best of it; but I do wish that

his voice was a little sweeter," Lalla said, with a sigh, as she gave Boom a consolatory pat with her little thin hand, which made him cease howling, and take instead to a series of short, joyful barks—which meant, in dog language, that he desired to go for a ramble in the park.

"Very well, you shall go, only don't make so much noise about it. Then, when we get to the pool where the water-lilies grow, I will sing and play for Jewel, and you shall sing too, you poor, musical old doggie," said Lalla. And her mother having gone into the house again through the French window of the south drawing-room, the little girl strolled away with her pets over the low iron fence dividing the lawn from the park, and then across the short, dry grass to the river.

It was a hot, glorious morning, and Lalla, though already stronger and better—thanks to the barefooted prescription of the great doctor—was soon tired of running races with Boom, and thankful to sit down under one of the big trees, and very close to the rustic foot-bridge leading over the stream in a short cut to the head-keeper's cottage on the other side of the park.

Then the concert began: Jewel, on his mistress's lap, wagging his small head with rapture at the tinkling of the mandoline; whilst ever and anon Boom lifted up his voice in a mighty howl.

But it was so hot that, after a time, even singing palled, and Lalla was glad to lean back against the gnarled trunk of the old tree, doing nothing but watch the crafty Jewel snapping up unwary flies which, emboldened by the little creature's seeming lifelessness, would come droning through the hot, clear air to settle on Lalla's frock.

Perhaps Lalla drowsed off to sleep in the heat of the summer noon, and, in her sudden awakening, jerked her knee; or, perhaps, in one of its rapid, darting movements, the lizard lost its balance and fell; but she could never remember quite clearly how it happened that the little creature tumbled from its place on her lap into the river.

With a cry of dismay, Lalla plunged in to the rescue, and, putting out her hand to seize her pet, had almost reached it, when one foot slipped in the treacherous mud of the river bottom, and over she went headlong into the water.

The current was very strong at that place, and by the time she rose to the surface, gasping and choking, she had already been swept some way out from the bank, and on towards the bridge.

“Oh, Boom, save me!” she gasped, as the swift current bore her onward, and she felt herself sinking into the deep water once more.

With a short, frightened bark the good dog sprang into the river; and, though he was by no means at home in the water, succeeded in gripping Lalla's frock before she sank the second time, and then, making a great effort, dragged her ashore.







## CHAPTER VIII.

### A Long Journey is Determined.

WHEN Mrs. Trevor went back into the house by the French window of the south drawing-room, she had gone straight to the housekeeper's room to hold a consultation with Mrs. Parker regarding a visitor who might be expected to arrive at the Manor within the next day or two; or whose coming might be delayed for three weeks, or even a month.

This expected guest was her brother, Sir Basil Hamilton, who had been in India fighting side by side with poor Raymond Trevor in that frontier skirmish that had cost Lalla's father his life. But Sir Basil had retired from the army now, and, being a yachting enthusiast, spent most of his time on board his beautiful yacht, the *Sylph*; cruising in northern waters during the summer months, and turning his vessel southwards when the winter came. But he had promised to pay a flying visit to his sister, on his return from a lengthy cruise

in the Gulf of Bothnia; and Mrs. Trevor was anxious that everything should be in readiness for his coming, at whatever time he might arrive.

After she had finished with the house-keeper, and paid a short visit to Lady Alicia—who, to-day, was keeping her room—it occurred to her to go upstairs to the picture-gallery, in order to look at a Rubens hanging there, which had been under discussion at dinner on the previous evening when some old friends of the Squire's had been present.

She had looked at the picture, and was coming away, when, chancing to look through one of the windows giving a view of the park, her attention was arrested by the sight of a man coming across the grass from the river, bearing something in his arms. The distance was too great for her short-sighted eyes to determine what the burden was; but at that moment a long-drawn, mournful howl, that only Boom could have produced, caught her ear, and, with a sharp cry of fear, she fled away downstairs, feeling certain that some disaster had happened to Lalla.

“She is not much hurt, I think, ma'am,



only drenched and frightened by her fall into the river; but the dog must have had her out in no time, I should say," the head-keeper called out cheerily, as he drew near with his burden towards the lawn fence, where Mrs. Trevor awaited his coming, too much unnerved by terror of what might have happened to Lalla to take another step forward.

"I'm all right, Mummy, only very wet and muddy," called out the little girl, in a quavering voice, which broke down in a sob as it went on; "but my poor, darling Jewel is drowned. I had almost clutched hold of him when I fell."

"Never mind Jewel, whilst I have you safe, my pet!" exclaimed her mother, breaking down in a sob also from sheer relief. Then turning to the keeper, she said urgently, "Please bring her in this way, Taylor; never mind the wet, it is quicker than by the door."

"Yes, ma'am," assented Taylor, though in rather a shocked tone, as he obediently followed the lady through the open window, and across the rich carpet out to the hall beyond; then up the great staircase to the landing above, whilst an oozing stream of

muddy water from Lalla's clothing marked the way he took, and filled his honest soul with forebodings concerning what the maids might have to say about it when they came to clean up.

"That dog is the cleverest animal I've ever met, ma'am," he said, a little later, when Mrs. Trevor had leisure from her care of Lalla to listen to his version of the accident. "I was sitting in my front room, peacefully smoking a pipe in my shirt-sleeves, when in through the open window bounced the dog, knocking down the flower-pots, upsetting the chairs, and, coming straight for me, laid a dripping wet sun-bonnet at my feet; then howled as if its heart was a-breaking, poor beast! I can tell you I felt bad, too, at the minute, for it didn't take two guesses to know that something had happened to the little lady; so I up and out of the door without waiting for a hat or a coat, and followed the dog, which set off back towards the river as hard as it could tear, while I ran behind. I found Miss Lalla gasping and crying, as wet as water could make her. She said she went into the water, to pull out that little foreign creature she is so fond of,

when her foot slipped, and she plumped right in just where the current is strongest ; the dog went in and fetched her out, and then she gave him her wet bonnet and sent him to fetch me, because my house was the nearest, and she had hurt her foot too much to walk home."

"Good dog !" murmured Mrs. Trevor, turning to pat Boom, the dog having come upstairs with the others, and waited whilst Lalla was being cared for.

"I'm going back to the river now, ma'am, to see if I can find that lizard. I'm not scholar enough to know whether water will drown that sort of creature ; but, dead or alive, it would be a satisfaction to find it," said Taylor, as he turned to make his exit by way of the great staircase, after a look round in search of some humbler mode of exit.

"Thank you, Taylor. I shall be much obliged if you will ; but please do not run any risk," Mrs. Trevor said, with a little shiver.

"No, there's nothing to worry about on that score, thank you, ma'am. I've got a spaniel that seems more at home in water than out of it, and we'll have a look at



the river together," the keeper answered; then, encountering one of the maids in the hall below, begged her to pilot him to the kitchen regions, and so made his escape from the bewildering grandeur of the state apartments.

But although the spaniel and he made a most exhausting survey of the banks on either side of the river—whilst the former, in addition, swam and dived in every direction, bringing up pieces of stick, weeds, and even rusty tins and fragments of worn-out shoes from the river bottom—there was no trace to be discovered of poor little Jewel; so Taylor, despite his avowed poverty of learning, was forced to the conclusion that water did drown lizards—or, rather, that it had drowned the one of which the little lady of the manor was so fond.

Meanwhile, Lalla herself was so ill from the effects of the shock of her fall into the river, and the resultant chill, that for three dreadful days her life hung in the balance. Then a turn for the better came, and she began slowly to recover; being so far convalescent by the middle of September that she could leave her room, and be brought downstairs to the sunny south drawing-room.



But now there was a hollow, racking cough to be reckoned with, and symptoms of lung weakness which caused the doctors to look grave; whilst the Squire became so irritable as to make life in the same house somewhat of a penance, for the sick child's looks reminded him of his own two daughters, who had faded so early into their graves; and the old man's heart was wrung with apprehension, lest Lalla might be drifting to the same untimely end.

Things at the Manor were in this unsatisfactory and anxious condition, when Sir Basil Hamilton arrived to pay his long-deferred visit. He was the best possible sort of guest for a gloomy household, being a bright, cheerful little man, with a chronic disposition to take the best and most hopeful view of life.

Before he had been at Oakenhurst three days, every one began to feel better for his coming, even the maids went flying about with new zest because of the more cheerful atmosphere of the house; whilst Lalla laughed until she cried at her uncle's funny stories of people and incidents that he had encountered on his travels.

"Where are you going when you leave

here, Uncle Basil?" she asked one morning, in the early days of the baronet's stay.

"As soon as the *Sylph* is ready for sea again—which, I am afraid, won't be before the second week in October—I am going cruising down the coast of Morocco, until I reach the Canary Islands; and I shall spend the winter taking short trips in and out among the islands. I am new to that part of the world, and should like to improve my geography a little," he answered, with a laugh.

"I wish I could go too; how nice to run away from the dreary, foggy winter!" cried Lalla, with a sigh—the Manor being a very depressing place in mid-winter, owing to its being so hemmed in with trees and woodlands.

"So you shall, if you like. Why, it would be the very thing for you; and your mother could come too, to look after you. I wonder it never occurred to me before. I'll go and talk it over with her at once; for the sooner preparations are put in hand, the better;" and away bounced Sir Basil, leaving Lalla in a condition of whirling excitement at the bare idea of anything so delightful.

"Amy, Amy, where are you? I want you," shouted the little baronet, running up and down in search of his sister, raising a mighty commotion and excitement, as was his wont when he wanted anything.

Mrs. Trevor hurried downstairs, with a startled look on her worn face, thinking that at the very least Lalla must have been taken suddenly and seriously worse; whilst the Squire, who had been sitting with Lady Alicia, also came to discover the reason of the hubbub.

"Lalla has just been saying she would like to go with me on my cruise down the African coast, and it is the best possible way of solving the problem of her winter residence; for, you know, the doctor said yesterday that it would be fatal to keep her in this damp hole all winter;" and the excitable Sir Basil flung his arm out with a disparaging gesture, that seemed to include all the varied richness and splendour gathered within the four walls of the gloomy old manor-house.

"I am afraid you would find us rather an encumbrance; for, of course, I should have to come too," said Mrs. Trevor, with a smile and a sudden lightening of her



heart, for she knew that if this brother of hers undertook to do a thing, he always carried it out very thoroughly.

"Of course you would have to come too ; for what do I know about the care necessary for a sick child—or a well one either, for the matter of that? But I can make you both very comfortable, I am sure ; and a long sea-voyage will just about set Lalla on her feet again."

"I really believe it would," answered Mrs. Trevor, a mist of tears almost blinding her ; for those weeks of anxiety and nursing had worn her terribly, and she knew herself to be almost in as much need of change as Lalla was.

The Squire alone looked dubious. A gentleman of the old school, he had made the grand tour when a young man, but had never been out of England since, and was inclined to regard a yachting cruise as a sure and certain means of destruction. However, he thought, Sir Basil had come and gone for so many years in safety, and appeared to so thoroughly enjoy life on the ocean wave, that, after all, the scheme might have its advantages.

"Come into Lady Alicia's room, and



let us talk the matter over," he said, in a lugubrious tone, for the mere prospect of Lalla being absent for months filled him with gloom, and he was only induced to consent to her going through his fears for her health and life.

"You will be on my side, Lady Alicia, I am sure," said Sir Basil, plumping himself down on a footstool by the old lady's couch. "I want to take Amy and Lalla for a cruise on the *Sylph*, and the sooner we start the better."

"Yes, I think it is a very wise idea. But you must remember, Sir Basil, that ladies' preparations for travelling take longer than gentlemen's, and especially when one is an invalid," she answered, leaning back on her cushions, and smiling serenely at his flushed, excited face.

"They need not in these days of method and despatch: a wire to London will bring down a capable individual, who will take your orders and have them executed within a week. Besides, I feel quite positive that by the time Lalla has been at sea ten days, she will pretty well forget that she ever was an invalid, or remember it only to be thankful that her condition served as

an excuse for a little extra gadding about."

There was no withstanding the persuasive eloquence of Sir Basil's tongue; and, the consent of the doctors having been secured to this disposal of their small patient, preparations were at once set on foot for the journey, which was to prove so much more momentous and far-reaching in its effects than any one of those concerned could possibly foresee.

Lalla was more delighted at the prospect of the cruise than words could express, and mended rapidly from the day on which the idea was first mooted, astonishing every one by her progress towards complete convalescence, and causing her uncle to tell her, with mock solemnity, that she was a regular fraud, and had only pretended to be sick in order that she might be taken for a cruise on the *Sylph*.

## CHAPTER IX.

### A Memorable Night.

"**I**S that Africa?" Lalla strained her eyes through the mist, to get the first glimpses of the low shore line, which the second officer had told her was coming into view.

It was the last week in October, but the *Sylph* had been so fortunate as only to encounter quiet weather in the dreaded Bay of Biscay; and now, with white sails set, was skimming like some graceful bird southward over the heaving green waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

"Yes, that is Africa, but the coast will look higher and more rugged as we get nearer; it is the mist which gives it such a dwarfed effect," said the mate, steadying his glass on the rail, so that Lalla was able to get a better view of the land just coming into sight.

She took one look, then hurried away down the companion to the little saloon where Mrs. Trevor was sitting, imploring her to come on deck and see Africa.

“What a funny way of putting it! Why don’t you say Tangier, or even Morocco? But Africa! Why, Lalla, it is like swallowing a continent at a single gulp,” laughed Mrs. Trevor, as she flung a cloak round her to go on deck.

“Oh, you can’t see enough of it to call it by a detailed name yet; it is like looking at a map of the world, so small that you can cover a whole continent with the tip of one finger. Isn’t it just lovely being at sea, mother? And are you not glad we came?” cried Lalla, executing festive skips on the saloon floor—one, two, and back again, for there was really no room to go farther.

“Indeed, I am most thankful,” replied Mrs. Trevor fervently; for Lalla’s cheeks again showed a glow of health, whilst her restless activity declared plainly the return of strength that made movement a delight.

Ten times a day would Sir Basil call for congratulations on the success of the plan that he had carried out with so much energy and determination; whilst Lalla would saucily remind him that it was not his idea at all, and he had no right to the



credit of it, since she herself had made the suggestion.

Boom accompanied the party, to his great satisfaction; though he sniffed his way all round the deck upon first going on board, and appeared doubtful in his own mind as to whether any one had any right to the deck, saving himself and his party. A few days, however, served to put him on good terms with the crew, who were half of them disposed to be afraid of him, and in consequence treated him to a respectful deference, which must have been very flattering to the big dog's self-respect.

For nearly a month the *Sylph* lay anchored off Tangier, it being Sir Basil's way when cruising to stay just as long as fancy prompted at whatever place he chose to drop anchor. Sometimes they went on shore; oftener they remained whole days without leaving the yacht. Sir Basil was his own captain and first officer, taking his watch regularly with the others; whilst the routine and discipline on board the *Sylph* were as rigid in their way as if the little pleasure yacht had been a man-o'-war.

From Tangier they crept steadily southward, following the flat, monotonous coast-line of

Morocco, and finding that every day the weather grew warmer and more summer-like.

Early in the mornings Lalla would be awakened by the swish and dash of water overhead, when the men were washing down the decks; then by the time she had taken her bath and completed her toilet, with a little assistance from the stewardess, the decks had dried clean and white in the sunshine, making an ideal playground for herself and Boom, where they romped to their heart's content until breakfast. Then, in the evenings, when a cool breeze stole over the ocean, they would sit in long chairs under the awning on the after-deck, whilst Sir Basil told stories of strange, wild adventures on sea and land, intermingled with thrilling recitals of the doings of the Riff pirates along this very coast of Morocco, that lay a black, monotonous line on their eastern horizon.

Another long stay was made at Mogadore, with many landward trips to vary the monotony of the voyage; and then, creeping steadily forward again, the week before Christmas found the *Sylph* on that part of the coast lying between Agadir and Cape Nun.







The weather had become so intensely hot that the white decks of the yacht scorched Lalla's bare feet, and she was glad to remain below in the saloon until the fiercest heat of the day was over.

Such extreme heat would be sure to bring a storm, Sir Basil said; and he looked anxiously at the barometer many times in every day for indications of the coming change, whilst the *Sylph* lay becalmed, looking like a painted ship upon a painted ocean.

The country at this point appeared to be uninhabited—at least so much of it as could be seen through a telescope from the mast-head of the yacht; and a very bare, uninviting coast it looked, with never a tree or shrub to break the monotony of the rolling hills, which stood as the advance guard of the mountains beyond.

Late one afternoon the barometer showed a sudden drop, and at once all hands were set to work getting everything on board ship-shape for the expected storm, which, judging from the indications, appeared likely to be of unusual violence. Sir Basil spent most of his time in scanning the coast-line through his most powerful glass, his face

all the time wearing an expression of anxiety very unusual to it.

“What is the matter, Uncle Basil—are you afraid the storm will be too bad for the *Sylph*?” asked Lalla, coming up from the close, stuffy heat of the saloon, to see if the torrid sultriness of the deck were a shade more bearable.

“I am looking for the opening to a little landlocked harbour that is to be found somewhere about this part of the coast. Ah, I believe it is just coming up now, for I can distinctly see a break in the coast-line close to that flat-topped hill or rock. Come here, will you, Davidson; your vision is keener than mine;” and Sir Basil summoned the first mate to his side, whilst Lalla remained close at hand, very much interested in the hunt for the sheltered anchorage where the *Sylph* might lie secure until the danger was past.

The first mate studied the coast-line for fully five minutes before venturing any comment upon it; then he said slowly, “I think that is the place, sir; not so much from the apparent break in the coast-line, which, you will see, as we get nearer in, is no break at all, but from the formation

of the hills—a round-topped bluff, then a pinnacle-shaped rock, and another bluff beyond. The opening should be between the pinnacle and the second bluff, if that fellow at Mogadore, who called himself a pilot, was telling the truth.”

“We will believe in the veracity of his statements, until we prove them false, Davidson, and work the yacht in as fast as she can be persuaded to go,” said Sir Basil, his anxiety merging into nervous excitement as he issued sharp, short orders to the man at the wheel; and the *Sylph*, under as much canvas as it was safe to carry, began, in nautical phraseology, to feel for the breeze that should bear her landward in search of the haven hidden in the hills.

Then Lalla, whose ears were sharp as needles, overheard fragments of a conversation between Sir Basil and his first mate, which set her wondering, and made her vaguely uneasy too.

“That is the place, sir, I am positive; though the channel in is still hidden, as the Mogadore pilot said it would be until we were within a mile or less of the shore. But are you quite sure you want to go



there? The yacht is as tight a craft as ever was built, and quite fit to ride out any storm, provided she has only got sea room."

"Which decidedly she hasn't got at the present minute," retorted Sir Basil testily, the very fact of his unwonted irritability bearing witness to his perturbation. "We can't be more than three miles from land, and the wind is in our favour for getting in—too late to show a clean pair of heels now to the shore, even if we wished to do so."

The mate dropped his voice to a lower key, though plainly he was urging something that his superior officer would not consent to, for Lalla saw her uncle shake his head with an unconvinced air; but as she only caught here and there a word of Davidson's, she could not even guess what his objections to going into harbour might portend.

"Natives—ladies on board—open sea, and mariners' luck"—nothing of this was capable of a satisfactory solution by her just then; so she dismissed it from her mind entirely for a time, and returned to the saloon to tell her mother that the head



of the *Sylph* was turned for the land, and they were going to run into a harbour, if only they succeeded in finding it.

"How very nice that will be, for a storm is certainly impending, and I am sure I should be ill again if the sea became very rough," replied Mrs. Trevor, who was a martyr to sea-sickness, and for that reason had engaged an experienced stewardess to attend upon herself and Lalla, instead of bringing a maid with her from the Manor.

"Poor Mummy, I'm glad that I am never sea-sick; it must be horrid. I hope they will find the harbour and get in all right, for I should dearly love to give Boom a run across country, and see what the place is like, even though it doesn't appear very interesting from outside. Won't you come up on deck, Mother? I think the heat is really more bearable up there than down here—at least it is not so stuffy."

They went on deck for half-an-hour or more; but by that time the heavens had gathered blackness, whilst the wind came in long, swirling blasts that took their breath away, and made them glad to take refuge below.

The *Sylph* was skimming through the water now, like some dainty ocean bird, her white bow dipping and lifting as she curtsied to the unfriendly land she was approaching so fast. The channel in was visible, and if only the light would hold for another hour, the little seafaring baronet was positive he could carry his vessel in triumphantly. It wanted more than that time to sundown; but this evening there were the clouds of the gathering storm to be reckoned with, and already the light was dim and uncertain, whilst the wind was freshening to a gale. He was standing with his eye glued to the glass, shouting his orders to the man at the wheel, whilst Davidson close by stood grim and silent, his face set in lines of stern disapproval.

"We shall do it! We shall do it!" yelled Sir Basil, stamping with quite frantic delight, as the *Sylph*, lifted on the crest of a big roller, took the narrow channel between the pinnacle rock and the round-topped bluff.

"Yes, we shall do it safe enough; the trouble is, will the doing be any satisfaction in the end," muttered Davidson, under his breath, as he flew to obey an order from Sir Basil about letting the anchor go.

But before the command could be carried out, the darkness dropped like a black pall over ocean and land; then before those on board had recovered the momentary confusion of this sudden coming of night, there was heard a loud grating sound, a great shiver ran through the yacht, and those who manned her knew that the *Sylph* was aground.

## CHAPTER X.

### What Ighli Saw.

TWENTY years before that memorable night, when the *Sylph* ran aground at the entrance to the cove—which was not the harbour of Arksis, despite the fact that it looked so much like it—there was living in a *duar*, or village, in that part of Sus, a miserly rich man named Sid 'el Bashir.

His *duar* stood high up in a sheltered valley about fifty miles from the coast; and he was rich in slaves, in cattle, and in horses, besides owning great stretches of argan\* forest, with olive yards, fig orchards, and wide-spread fields of maize and barley. But greatly as he valued his broad acres, and the live-stock of all kinds which helped to make those acres so productive and fruitful, he loved best of all yellow gold, and sparkling diamonds, with every precious stone of price that could be bought for money or money's worth. He lived poorly,

\* A tree something like an English yew-tree, the berries of which are used for feeding cattle, and for oil.



and fared hardly all the days of his later years, in order that he might increase his wealth, and satisfy the craving for hoarded gain, which had come to be almost a mania with him.

There were no banks in that part of the world, or any other means of taking care of portable riches, such as silver and gold, otherwise than by hiding them, so it was the custom to dig holes in out-of-the-way places and deposit the treasure there, and to let it lie hid until a need arose for its use. A man would lade a mule with a burden of gold and silver coins, jewels, and anything else needing to be hidden from the prying gaze of the thievish, and, taking one or two slaves to assist in the work, start away on a journey into the desolate and inaccessible parts of the hills. When he came to a place which suited his purpose, he would cause the slaves to dig the hole and bury the treasure ; after which he would kill the slaves with his own hand, to prevent them talking and betraying the whereabouts of the hiding-place.

This thing Sid 'el Bashir had done many times, until the number of his hiding-holes mounted up to near upon a score ; and he

was richer than any other man in the Sus country, although no one was aware of the fact save himself, and even he had but the haziest idea of the extent of his great wealth.

Then there came a day when he had yet another mule's burden of gold to hide; and choosing out two slaves, fine, sturdy young negroes, he had had one mule laden with sacks of treasure, and seating himself upon another—for he was growing feeble with advancing age—he started for a wild glen that he knew of, where no foot ever trod, saving those of the wild sheep, and the leopards which preyed upon them.

No one saw them start, saving a small black boy named Ighli; for Sid 'el Bashir was careful to plan these little expeditions of his, so that they attracted the least possible amount of publicity.

It so chanced that, about a year before, Ighli's own father, whom he dearly loved, had gone away on such a journey as this; but, needless to say, he had never returned; and Ighli mourned him still, for his loss had left him with nothing to love, which is in itself a calamity. When, therefore, he saw his master starting off upon another

of these mysterious journeys, Ighli at once resolved that he would go too, so that he might see for himself what happened.

Keeping so far in the rear that neither Sid 'el Bashir nor the two slaves could catch sight of him, the little black boy trotted after the travellers, following them past the sheep and cattle inclosures immediately surrounding the duar, across the fig orchards and grain fields, into the forests of prickly oak, gumcistus, and arbutus that clothed the steep hill-side.

"They go to a soko," he whispered to himself, as, panting and perspiring, he toiled along in the wake of the travellers; but his eyes shone with delight, and his heaving breast was filled with a most resolute determination to see the end of this business at whatever cost to himself. A *soko* was a country market where slaves and cattle, horses and sheep, were bought and sold, with every other conceivable article of merchandise likely to prove of value to dwellers in that sparsely settled region; and Ighli wanted to see a soko more than he wanted anything, saving, indeed, the father he had so strangely lost.

But he remembered later, as the forests



gave place to thickets of thorny scrub, and grass so long that his small legs had hard work to struggle through it, that a soko had been held in the district only one moon previously, and that Sid 'el Bashir had sold five hundred head of cattle, three hundred horses, and a hundred slaves—both men and women; so that this *subhiyah*, or morning's ride, could scarcely be taken for the sake of attending a market, since in those wild districts sokos were held only once or twice a year. This was a disappointing reflection, but Ighli argued to himself that if it were not a soko, it might easily be something quite as interesting; besides, he was by this time so far from Sid 'el Bashir's duar as to be completely lost, and his only chance of ever finding himself again lay in taking care not to lose sight of the party in front. So he toiled on still, a very tired and hungry boy, but with unabated curiosity.

His efforts were rewarded presently by seeing the party halt, whilst Sid 'el Bashir descended from his mule, and became actively engrossed in directing the efforts of the two slaves, who were now digging a hole under the shadow of a big boulder.



Both the slaves appeared tired with their long tramp from the duar in the hot sunshine, for Sid 'el Bashir never spared any thing or anyone belonging to him. One of them was more exhausted than the other, or appeared to be, for he kept falling down, and did not move or even wince when his master kicked him.

Ighli, who, hidden by the long grass and scrub, had crept quite close, believed in his own mind that the slave was shamming. His name was Hashem, and Sid 'el Bashir had bought him at the last soko but one, taking him in exchange for a couple of broken-winded mules; a great bargain, and one that the cheating old miser had chuckled over ever since, although, had he but known it, it was one he was to pay dearly for in the end.

Presently Sid 'el Bashir left off kicking Hashem, who lay spread out and limp as if already dead, and hurried to help the other slave in finishing the hole, and hiding the mule's burden therein.

When this was done, the hole was filled up again, and grass and scrub arranged over it to lend a natural, undisturbed appearance to the spot; then, without a

minute's warning of what he was going to do, Sid 'el Bashir cocked his long gun, and coolly shot his patient helper through the heart.

The barrel had not done smoking, the death-cry of the murdered slave was still ringing in Ighli's horrified ears, when, with a snarling growl like an enraged wild beast, Hashem sprang upon the old miser from behind.

Taken quite unawares—for Sid 'el Bashir had believed Hashem to be dying, if not already dead—he was unable even to draw a dagger in self-defence, and so it was a double tragedy which Ighli saw that morning on the hills.

He understood then why it was his own dearly-loved and sorely-longed-for father had never come back to cheer the heart of his little son ; for it was plain the poor black had been killed by his master, even as the one Ighli had seen die but a few minutes before.

But now Sid 'el Bashir himself was dead, and his lean old body was being hastily stripped by Hashem, who was apparently searching for something which he supposed to be hidden on the dead man's person.

Judging by his extravagant capers of delight, he found that for which he had searched, as Ighli saw him tuck some object, like a strip of parchment, into the ragged loin-cloth which was the only garment he wore; then, without further loss of time, he proceeded to dig up the sacks of treasure which had just been buried; and, loading the burden once more on to the back of the mule, he donned the flowing garments of his dead master, and, mounting the other mule, rode slowly away by the opposite way to which he had come.

Again Ighli started in pursuit; not so much from curiosity as from an instinct of self-preservation; for he dared not stay alone in the wilderness, where Sid 'el Bashir and the murdered slave lay with dead faces turned upward to the sky. There would be jackals coming to the feast, with hyænas and leopards for companions by and by; and if provisions ran short, who could tell but that the wild beasts might not slacken their hunger on the little black boy who had wandered so far from his duar.

But what are two legs compared to four—especially when the two belong to a little



black boy, who had started on his travels without any breakfast?

It was the very longest journey Ighli had ever undertaken, and he was so thoroughly lost that the most he could hope for was that he might keep the mules in sight, until he reached some duar where he could rest and shelter.

But the haunts of men were the very places that Hashem most desired to shun; and as the country through which he travelled became continually wilder and more broken, Ighli was soon filled with complete despair, and faced with the dreadful alternative of either starving and being eaten by the wild beasts of the desert, or discovering himself to Hashem and being killed by him. Of the two fates, Ighli thought he would prefer to take his chance with the denizens of the wilds; but, in the end, choice in the matter was taken from him.

The two mules had been going slower and slower, as if they too were tired and hungry, until, reaching a little stream trickling out from some big rocks, Hashem halted, dismounted, unloaded the burden from the back of the second mule, tethered both animals, and then prepared to rest.



Forthwith Ighli resolved to rest also, making up his mind to sleep with one eye open, so that he might rouse directly Hashem stirred to continue his journey.

If only there had been something to eat, he would have been happier; but it was not the first time in his short life that he had gone fasting, so he bore the discomfort with a patient resignation, curling himself into a tight black ball down in the warm, soft grass, and dropping asleep without further delay. So cosy and warm was his hiding-place, and such a tired small boy was Ighli, that his slumber was much too profound for him to remember anything about keeping one eye open, and his repose remained unbroken whilst the long hours stole by. The night came and passed; then the cheerful sun rose once more to gladden the world.

Ighli woke with a start; jumped up, gazed cautiously about him, then uttered a sharp little cry of fear; for the spot beside the stream was deserted, Hashem and the mules having started again on their travels, leaving him alone in the wilderness.

In the terror of his first loneliness, he

was almost inclined to wish that Hashem had found him and killed him, even as Sid 'el Bashir had been killed. But that was only for the first five minutes or so; then putting all his small wits to work, he set himself to the task of finding his way to some haunt of men.

He succeeded, too. Arriving a little before sundown at a big duar, where the people were kind, feeding him with *tshisha*—which is porridge made of crushed barley boiled with water—he satisfied his rampant hunger; and, out of gratitude, he stayed at that duar until he was a man grown.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A Chance of Gain.

**I**T was twenty years since Sid 'el Bashir had died by the hand of Hashem, but in all that time Ighli had never by word or look betrayed his knowledge of the details of that dark deed. He had been silent at first through fear, and then later from caution, knowing that his life would not be worth an hour's purchase if the Kaid ever had reason to guess at what was stored at the back of his black servant's mind.

Ighli had been a stripling, just able to do a man's work, when the old Kaid of Isgueder died, and the rich man of the hills was chosen Kaid in his room.

No one knew whence came this new Kaid, or where he had found his wealth—that is, no one knew save Ighli, who at the first glance recognised in the rich man of the hills that same Hashem, who had slain Sid 'el Bashir, and stolen his gold.

Such a very rich man was Hashem now,

that Ighli could only suppose the piece of parchment stolen from the old miser's corpse to have been some kind of clue to other places of hidden treasure—which clue the ex-slave had followed up with such profitable results to himself. But Ighli kept his own counsel still, and waited patiently for the time to come when he also might, perchance, get some portion of the dead miser's wealth for his own, in the shape of hush-money, that the new Kaid would be willing to pay as the price of his silence.

Meanwhile, he took service under the new chief of the duar, biding his time with the stolid patience which was as much a part of his nature as his black skin and woolly hair.

The duar in which Ighli had lived so long was not far from the coast, and the people found much of their profit and commercial wealth in collecting shells from the sea-shore, and making them into necklaces and head-dresses, which were sent to sokos inland, and sold to the dwellers of the interior. Sometimes other and more valuable things than shell necklaces went the same road: shipwrecked crews cast on that inhospitable shore were seized,



bound, and carried off to be sold as slaves. For, although white slavery was not allowed by law in the land, it was largely in existence, and the traffic in white people went briskly on, few caring for the law, which was, after all, more a shadow than a substance in that wild country, with its sparse and scattered population.

The new Kaid of Isgueder owned many slaves, both black and white; these last being chiefly hidden away in secluded districts of the hills, and in little known valleys where he had lonely farms, for raising cattle and grain for sale at the sokos held year by year on the borders of the great desert, many miles away.

All this Ighli knew, but no one suspected how wise he was, or how he meant to turn his wisdom to account some day.

He was quite an artist in shell-work himself, and spent long days in drilling tiny holes in gleaming pink and white shells, in shape like sharks' teeth, then stringing them into necklaces, or building them into wonderful adornments for the hair. Despite his industry, however, he found ample time for spying upon the doings of the Kaid, and had been away for many days on a round

of secret visits to those far-away settlements among the hills, when, returning one day near to sunset, he found the duar in a ferment bordering upon panic.

The houses of this village had been built, for convenience of wood and water, about a mile inland, where, tucked away in a sheltered valley, they were protected alike from the stormy winds raging in from the ocean, and the devastating *shoom*, or hot wind, blowing across the great desert.

A big ship, with smoke, was anchored near to the small cove, where their finest shells were found, and all the coast was being searched for traces of a little ship, which had come that way and got lost.

"When did the little ship come, and how did it get lost?" demanded Ighli of his friend and comrade, Selam, who was one of the first to meet him with the wonderful news.

"No one knows, no one has seen the little ship, save in their dreams," retorted Selam, with a grimace, which made his ugly face ten times more repulsive than before.

"Ah!" exclaimed Ighli, with a big windy sigh inflating his chest, and a gleam

of intelligence shining in his eyes, "did the Kaid dream of the little, lost ship too?"

"The Kaid never dreams," rejoined Selam, yawning his black jaws open widely in a hideous grin. "And they are saying that a drove of white slaves are even now crossing the hills to the country bordering on the great desert."

Ighli started violently, but not even to Selam his friend would he reveal the thoughts lingering in the back of his mind; for in that wild, lawless land there was no honour even in friendship, and a man would betray his nearest and dearest for the chances of gain. So he stretched his long, naked limbs in a careless, indifferent fashion, saying lazily, "Then I, Ighli, say that they will never reach so far, for white slaves are but weakly creatures, and drop by the wayside, worn out by the toil and the hardship of the journey."

"These white slaves are many, and worth a price," babbled Selam, who had no gift of reticence like Ighli, and could always be induced to tell all he knew, and a little more on to that, if only the questioner understood the art of shaking the information out.



"You have only dreamed of them. How should you know?" snorted Ighli, with a fine contempt expressed in face and gesture.

"Only dreamed! Yea, but by the bones of the Prophet, it was a most telling vision!" ejaculated Selam, rolling up his eyes until the whites alone were visible. "One night there was a most terrible storm, when the evil spirits of the ocean met the evil spirits of the land in conflict in the upper air, fierce lightning flashed, heavy thunders rolled, and all the time a little ship, which had wandered and got lost, was breaking to pieces on the rocks of the cove."

Selam paused for want of breath, he being very fat; but Ighli made no remark, only nodded encouragingly, and after a minute the other went on—

"When morning came, it was found that the people of the little ship had come ashore in boats; then the Kaid met them, and, with kind words, offered them the shelter of his duar among the hills—and that is all the dream."

"Did they come to the duar?" asked Ighli.



"The Kaid has many duars," responded Selam, and then began to tell his friend of a wonderful shell he had seen on the shore a day or two after the storm, and which proved to be not a shell at all, but a little china vase; doubtless a relic from the ill-fated vessel, which had been caught on the rocks and ground to pieces by the fury of the tempest.

When the recital was over, Ighli wandered away in a state of great perplexity. In his own mind he had decided that the time was ripe for overthrowing the power and influence of the rich but wicked Kaid, who caught free people and sold them into slavery. But how to bring about the exposure was more than he could tell. Even supposing he tramped over the country to the distant place of abode of the nearest representative of the law, and denounced the chief of his village, the only result would be that Hashem would bribe the official to silence on the matter, and he, Ighli, would make a speedy meal for the jackals.

There was one other course open to him, and that was to make his way to the shore, and communicate with the people on the

big ship. But that had its perils also; and he was much too cautious by nature to take any risks which might by care be avoided. So he would not even go down to the shore to search for shells, but, when morning came, set out again on a seemingly aimless wandering, which, however, was far less aimless than it appeared.

It was in the scorching noontide that he was passing through a patch of tall grass, such as wild pigs love to go to cover in, when the sound of a low moan of pain caught his ear.

He stopped, hesitating; not because his heart was hardened against the cry of anything in distress, but he was primed with the legendary lore of his country, and dreaded lest the sound should proceed from some *Jin*, or evil spirit, hidden there. Reflecting, however, that the white cock's feather, which he wore in his hair, should be protection sufficient to guard him from any ordinary danger, he plunged into the patch of tall grass and scrub from whence issued the sounds of suffering.

But, a moment later, he started back with a cry of affright, having stumbled almost on to what, at first glance, he

thought to be a wounded lion, than which it would be difficult to find a creature more dangerous. A second glance showed him, however, that this was no wounded lion, only a very large dog, which, from its appearance, had been brutally knocked about, and then left for dead.

Ighli's sympathies were instantly on the alert; rarely did anything suffering appeal to him in vain. The poor dog was plainly parched with thirst, so, running to a little stream that he knew welled out of the hills not far away, he wet his loin-cloth, and, running quickly back, squeezed drops of moisture into the poor animal's mouth; being more than rewarded for his pains by the almost human gratitude displayed by the big dog.

Then he began to examine the hurts of his find, touching the gaping wounds with a hand so tender that the dog yielded to the examination without a motion of protest, although the poor creature had been so terribly mauled that the marvel was it had not already succumbed to its injuries.

He remembered having seen *tserbil*, which is a kind of wild sage, growing near to the water's edge, when he stooped down to



wet his garment; and, hurrying again to the stream, he returned with a large bunch in his arms, with the leaves from which he then proceeded to dress the wounds of the dog. The healing properties of this herb were well known and appreciated among the country people, who, indeed, believed it to be a sovereign remedy for every description of wound, bruise, or sore.

The cooling leaves soon seemed to bring relief; the dog moaned less, and even tried to feebly wag its tail. Ighli laughed and jumped in great delight at these signs of recovery in his patient; then finding an old earthen pot imbedded in the mud at the side of the stream, he fished it up, rinsed off the loose mud in the stream, and filling it as full as it would hold with water, carried it in triumph to the patch of long grass, so that the dog might drink its fill.

Already in his own shrewd mind, Ighli had arrived at a fairly correct conclusion as to the dog's presence in that particular place, and the reason of its wounded condition: it must have belonged to the little ship that had been lost upon the rocks, and attempting to follow the shipwrecked



people, who were being spirited away by the Kaid, had been lashed almost to death by knotted whips, such as were used in the correction of the swarms of snarling, rapacious dogs which hung about the houses of the duar.

Then, as if by a flash of inspiration, there darted into the brain of Ighli a plan, by which he might bring gain to himself and discomfiture to the Kaid at one and the same time.

## CHAPTER XII.

### Timbuctoo Finds a Clue.

A CANARY ISLAND freight steamer lay anchored about half a mile from shore, almost in a direct line with the little cove into which Sir Basil Hamilton had taken the *Sylph*, under the impression that it was the landlocked harbour of Arksis, only to find, when too late, that it was no haven at all, but a treacherous, rocky bay, where, caught on the rocks, his beautiful yacht was simply beaten to pieces by the terrible seas breaking upon her.

The freight steamer, beating down from Mogadore on the Morocco coast, to Puerto de Cabras in the Canary Islands, had come upon one of the *Sylph's* boats floating about three miles out from the treacherous bay of rocks, which, from its resemblance to the entrance to Arksis, was answerable for the doom of more than one storm-fugitive vessel.

Being short of water, as well as anxious to know what had befallen the trim little

yacht—concerning the beauty and perfection of which he had heard so much whilst lading at Mogadore—Captain Ellerby determined to spend a day or two in replenishing his stock of water, and endeavouring to ascertain if his fears were correct as to the fate of Sir Basil's yacht.

At first he was disposed to think he had made a fine mistake, which might land him in no end of trouble with his owners; for not merely was the task of landing a boat both difficult and dangerous, but when this was effected, the country appeared to be uninhabited, and no water of any kind except salt was to be found anywhere.

Among the boat's crew that went ashore was a seaman, whose real name of Timothy Buck had been shortened to Timbuctoo, owing to his having once visited that renowned but insalubrious capital.

Now Timbuctoo was better versed in the little ways of dwellers in that region than his chief, and, pointing out that the men of Sus were much too shrewd to plant their villages on exposed headlands, where the fierce winds would make short work of the flimsy architecture, he suggested that

a search inland would doubtless result in the finding of people, and water also.

Captain Ellerby consented to this, though all the while quaking at the prospect of the bad half-hour before him, should it be his misfortune to arrive forty-eight hours late at Puerto de Cabras.

The village was found, as Timbuctoo had declared it would be—the people inhabiting it proving to be simple, harmless shell-workers, whilst the Kaid, or headman of the place, appeared to be a farmer in quite a prosperous way of business, judging by the amount of live-stock in the inclosure surrounding his dwelling. He happened to be too sick to grant them an audience, but sent one of his servants to show them where good water might be found close to the sea-shore, made them a present of a fine sheep, and expressed through his deputy a complete ignorance of any other vessel having been seen near that coast for a year or more.

“It sounds all right, but then you can never tell, not when you’ve them sly beggars of Moors to reckon with,” said Timbuctoo, as they perspiringly worked at filling the water-barrels, and rolling them down the shingly strand to the boat.



"It sounds all wrong to me, to think I have wasted all this time, and with no excuse to show for it save a broken condenser," growled Captain Ellerby, as he watched the last barrel being put in the boat, and then prepared to get in himself.

He had come ashore with his men, owing to that presentiment which was almost a conviction, that the *Sylph* had been wrecked at that spot, and he was feeling most unreasonably angry and disappointed because his sailor superstitions and belief in omens had led him so thoroughly astray for once. Then, too, he had left his ship in the care of the second mate, a young fellow who had shipped with him for the first time this voyage, the first mate being *hors de combat* with a broken leg.

Just as he was stepping into the boat, getting finely wet in the process—a state of things by no means conducive to amiability—there was a shout from Timbuctoo, who, a minute later, came running down to the water's edge, holding in his hand a mandoline, which he had found in a cranny between two rocks, and a sailor's hat with the name, *Sylph*, in gold letters on the band.

"It's as I said, cap'en ; you can't never be sure which way to take them Moors ; and most likely that old Kaid who gave us the sheep was only shamming sick, 'cause he'd a guilty conscience, and didn't dare face us," said Timbuctoo, who was fairly shaking with excitement.

"What is to be done now ?" exclaimed the captain, with an air of desperation, foreseeing plainly enough that this find meant the delay of another twenty-four hours at the very least.

"Leave me behind with a brace o' barkers to nose round a bit, and then to-morrow send a boat with a couple more water-barrels, just for the look of the thing, don't you see," replied Timbuctoo, with a wink full of meaning ; and, though he groaned a little, the captain was fain to give way, for well he knew that if only there were any survivors from the ill-fated yacht, and he able to succour them, the delay in his voyage would be amply met and compensated.

When the boat had gone, Timbuctoo made an exhaustive survey of the place, which resulted in his finding more traces of wreckage, pathetic little relics of the

tragedy enacted there — a lady's shoe, a fragment of looking-glass, and a travelling clock. Then he determined that next day was too soon for the boat to return, and when the night was at its darkest, he lighted a fire of dried grass and scrub under the shelter of the tallest headland, taking care to choose the place on as high ground as possible, so that it might show out at sea, yet at the same time taking care that it would not be visible inland.

His little fire blazed up brightly, and was speedily answered by a shower of rockets from the vessel in the offing; and then Timbuctoo carefully fired two other piles of grass and debris which he had arranged before darkness fell, so that he soon had three fires blazing in a row. This three-fold illumination had been arranged between himself and the captain for a signal, if he found any trace of survivors, and desired a longer time before the return of the boat for following up his clue.

This second signal was answered by a blue flare from the vessel, and then Timbuctoo laid down in the most sheltered spot he could find, with a stone for his pillow, like the wayfaring Jacob in the



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Scriptures, and slept until the morning came.

The mandoline, and the sailor's hat, had been sent on board with the captain, whilst the sodden shoe which Timbuctoo found after he was left alone, he carefully dried and stowed away in his pocket for future use—so he told himself.

He spent the morning in creeping among the thick fringe of stunted, prickly oaks which sheltered the cultivated fields from the ravages of the wind; but, though he saw the villagers at their daily avocations, and even had to dodge out of sight more than once of Ighli in his wanderings, Timbuctoo found no trace of the survivors for whom he was searching so anxiously, and might even have come to believe the whole thing a dream or delusion, but for that dainty shoe in his pocket.

It was past noon, and, thoroughly discouraged, he was making his way back to the sea-shore, creeping from one bit of cover to another, when, to his surprise and consternation, he was hailed with a shout, and, looking round, saw the same black man he had previously observed, making signs for him to stop.



Reflecting that his barkers, as he called the captain's pistols, were all ready for action in his jacket pocket, Timbuctoo made the best of it, and waited for the black to come up, marvelling even in that critical moment at the scantiness of the native's attire, which consisted only of a white feather in his black wool, an elaborate shell necklace, and a loin-cloth, or short petticoat, of very ragged, dirty cotton stuff, which appeared to be dripping wet. The people whom he had seen about the village that day had been covered in cotton wrappings from top to toe, like the swathings of a mummy, so that this individual's undressed condition was, to say the least, rather striking. But he was undoubtedly friendly, advancing with extended palms, and what was meant for a frank, winning smile on his grotesque ebony features.

"Ighli make friends, and tell white man much news," he said, speaking in very fair, though broken English, to the great amazement of Timbuctoo.

"I hope you are going to tell me something about the survivors of the *Sylph*, for that is what I should call good news," rejoined the sailor, striking both his own

horny palms on Ighli's in token of trust and amity.

"Come, see what Ighli found," said the black, turning into a narrow path, winding through a grove of stunted trees, and ascending rapidly to wild, uncultivated tracts of grass and scrub.

Timbuctoo followed without hesitation; if there was treachery, and he was walking into a death-trap, he resolved that some one else should die as well as himself. But even the thought of personal peril went out of his mind, when he reached the spot where the big dog lay wounded among the grass and scrub.

"Why, come up, my hearty! Now, then, but you do be a beauty!" he exclaimed, going down on his knees and fondling the poor beast, which responded as heartily as it was able, striving to stand, but rolling over from sheer weakness. "But there were more saved than this poor beast, surely?" and Timbuctoo looked suspiciously at the black, whose hands the dog was licking.

"Ighli not know. The Kaid of Isgueder—bad man that sells white people into slavery; but Ighli can frighten him if the white man will help."

"You can? Very well, let us set about doing it without delay," said Timbuctoo, with a valorous air. It was not his nature to be afraid of anything, either on two legs or four, and he had been suspicious of the Kaid ever since the gift of the sheep.

"Can white man shoot?" demanded Ighli, seeing no weapon in evidence on the sailor's person.

"Rather, see here!" and a pair of formidable-looking pistols were flashed in Ighli's face, causing him to hop backwards in a great hurry.

"Now, Ighli tell white man what to say, and so he frighten the Kaid till he shake in his old black skin," chuckled the native; and, squatting down on the ground with one arm lovingly curled round the neck of the dog, he proceeded to relate, in his broken English mixed with Arabic—the language of the great desert, and mostly used in that part of Sus—the story of his life, beginning with that of his father, and the death of that old miser, Sid 'el Bashir.

It took some time, and many repetitions, before Timbuctoo could gather the real sense of the narrative, and understand its relation to the matter in hand, as well as

the part he himself was to play in it. But, when he thoroughly understood, he just lay back with his head in a lump of scrub as prickly as a gooseberry bush, and laughed until his eyes were full of tears, whilst Ighli hovered over him in great distress, thinking that he must be dying from some strange malady to which only white men were prone. Then he suddenly grew serious, and hurrying off to the headland, with Ighli's help lighted a fire of grass only, which would smoke but not blaze—a signal that meant, "Come as soon as you can."

This signal having been observed and duly answered from the ship, Timbuctoo rubbed his hands gleefully, and turned to his black friend. "Now, let us go and get our little visit over, for I confess I'm quite excited about making that old black rascal's acquaintance."



## CHAPTER XIII.

### How the Kaid was Frightened.

THE residence of the Kaid of Isgueder, although quite three times the size of any other house in the village, was by no means a palatial place, and, indeed, more closely resembled a cow-shed than anything, being a long, low building, its walls of sun-dried brick, its roof of barley straw overlaid with clay. The interior was divided into three apartments—a large one in the centre, with a small one at each end.

The afternoon was drawing on towards sundown, when Ighli, accompanied by Timbuctoo, arrived at the abode of this local magnate, craving speech with him. An anxious-looking woman, swathed in dirty blue and white calico, shook her head nervously. "The Kaid is sick, and keeps his room to-day," she murmured, speaking as if her mouth were full of peas.

"It is no matter, I bring him one who has great news to tell," Ighli said, with such an air of haste and urgency that the

woman at once fell back to let them enter.

In the centre of the floor a fire was burning, the smoke of which found its way out through a hole in the thatch; a hen was brooding some chickens close to the ashes; and at each end, rough planks raised from the floor the few sacks which served as bedding for the retinue of the great man.

But the Kaid had his own private apartment, or withdrawing-room, towards which Ighli pressed, followed by the seaman, who accidentally stumbled over the brooding hen, causing her to fly up in an agitated, protesting fashion, whilst the chicks dispersed in all directions, peeping wildly.

Dragging aside the piece of dirty sacking, which served as entrance-door to the private apartment of the Kaid, Ighli passed in, Timbuctoo, as before, following close at his heels.

"Great news, Kaid! See, I have brought you one from a far country, who is laden with a burden of truth for your ears alone!" cried Ighli, in the eager, excited tones of a bearer of good tidings.

Seated on a low plank bed, over which

a big leopard-skin was flung, was a big black man as unclothed as Ighli, except that on his head he wore a tremendous erection compiled of shells, precious stones, and feathers. He looked up with a snarl of surprise, which altered instantly to craven fear, as he found himself covered with two pistols at uncomfortably close range, and heard Timbuctoo say quietly—

“If you move or holler, you’ll be a dead un before you’ve time to wink!”

There was a moment of strained, tense silence following this unusual kind of introduction; and then the Kaid, whose great jaws had been working savagely in unavailing rage, managed to find voice to ask, “What is it you have come to tell me, that you come with war, and not with peace?”

“That old crime of yours in slaying Sid ’el Bashir, and stealing his gold, has all come out; and you are in pretty lively danger of being hauled up for trial, and swinging by the neck until you are dead—if so be that is the way they settle that sort of thing in this part of the world,” said Timbuctoo, in a slow, impressive tone, rather enjoying the situation than otherwise.

now that he knew he had the upper hand of this tyrannical, slave-making Kaid, who had begun life a slave himself, and only risen to wealth and power by murder and robbery.

Hashem faced his accuser with eyes that almost started out of his head, whilst his great teeth, yellow with much chewing of Indian hemp, chattered noisily together, and he sat revealed for what he was—a craven-spirited bully.

“Name the price of your silence, and it is yours. I am rich, and I am generous too,” whined he, cowering on the leopard-skin in mortal fear lest every moment that passed should be his last.

“Ah, you are generous, and no mistake,” retorted the sailor. “That old sheep you gave me and my mates yesterday would have died of old age before the week was out, if you hadn’t killed the poor animal to save its life. And that big dog what came ashore from the *Sylph*, and was thrashed to death by your orders, is another striking instance of the beautiful charity of your nature. But it is more than a sheep that you’ve got to fork out this time, I can tell you.”



"Fifty sheep, or a hundred ; yea, the half of my riches for your silence," groaned the Kaid, in growing terror. He could not imagine where this stranger had learned so much concerning his dark past, unless, indeed, a *Jin* had revealed it to him, since he firmly believed no mortal eye had witnessed that bygone tragedy, when Sid 'el Bashir met the fate he so richly deserved.

"Sheep won't hardly suit my purpose to-day, thank you. They are awkward cargo at the best of times, and we are likely to be rather crowded this trip," Timbuctoo replied easily, still holding his pistols as if he meant instant business. "What I do want, and what I mean to have, Mr. Hashem Isgueder, or whatever you call yourself, is—every man, woman, and child that came ashore from the *Sylph*, with any other white slave that you may happen to have stowed away in hiding, together with a mule's burden of treasure, such as you stole from Sid 'el Bashir."

Having delivered this ultimatum, Timbuctoo smacked his lips in a loud, approving fashion, as if he liked the sound of the lesson he had learned from Ighli's coaching, then

straightened himself to his full height, and stood beaming down upon the wretched Kaid with a benevolent, yet inflexible, smile.

A couple of spears used in hunting wild pig rested almost within an arm's length of the Kaid, whilst a huge knife lay on the floor at his feet ; yet he dared not move his finger even, through terror lest one, or both, of those pistols should go off in his face.

Even now, however, he tried to temporise. "Treasure you shall have, such indeed as a poor man may spare from his poverty, but white slaves I have none, it being against the laws of my country to hold white men in thrall."

"All the worse for you, then, seeing that folks who break the laws mostly have to suffer for it," rejoined Timbuctoo grimly. "But if you've no white slaves, I want to know why you've kept that brother of mine mewed up all this time, digging clay for bricks, working like a horse, week in, week out, his only payment the lash of your old whip on his shoulders? And what about those other white men that you have sold to traders of the great desert, or those who have died of hardship, whilst still in your grip?"

The Kaid groaned and shivered, rolling up his eyes as if he were about to have a fit, for truly, he was more scared than ever in his life before, not merely because of the pistols, although they were terrifying enough, but because of the knowledge possessed by this stranger.

Ighli, at a sign from Timbuctoo, had already disappeared—a circumstance rather welcome than otherwise to the Kaid, who did not care for one of his own people to hear these accusations which were being heaped upon him by this stranger, who had come from he knew not where.

“It may be, some survivors from the ill-fated ship of which you speak may have wandered past my door in their ignorance of the country, to lose themselves in the hills beyond. We will make search for them through the valleys, and let you know what we find; but having had this sore sickness upon me, I have not myself been abroad for days.”

“I daresay you haven’t; and if you don’t behave yourself, and just speak out about them white captives of yours, it is likely you will bide indoors a good while longer yet, and with perhaps more ventilating holes



in that black skin of yours than you had any way bargained for," Timbuctoo rejoined calmly, keeping one eye on the terrified man crouching on his leopard-skin, whilst with the other he took stock of the place and its resources.

He was reflecting on the situation, and how excessively awkward his own position would be if a dozen or so of the people in the village were to rush to the succour and relief of their chief. It might be an hour or more before Ighli returned with the party from the boat; it might even chance that the boat would be unable to land at all, if the sea were as rough as it had been on the previous day. But he had been in perilous situations before to-day, and was not going to be dismayed until there seemed to be good reason for fear. He noticed, lying on the floor under his feet, a long length of stout hempen rope, which might come in useful later, to bind the cowardly rascal who grovelled before him; but, for the present, he decided the only thing to be done was to keep his pistols well in evidence, and ascertain, if he could, where the survivors from the *Sylph* were hidden.



Ighli had warned him of the importance of this information, since it would take weeks, perhaps months, to search unaided through the network of wooded valleys, and among the towering hills intervening between the coast and the borders of the great desert.

"No brother of thine do I hold in thrall," ventured the Kaid, with a wriggle on his leopard-skin, breaking a silence which had lasted long enough for Timbuctoo to make up his mind on several points.

"Don't be too sure o' that!" retorted the other, with a significant movement of his pistol which made the Kaid squirm. "Wherever there's a white man fallen into the power of a tyrannical old rogue like yourself, I take it he's my brother, that I've got to stand by and help; so, you see, we're a pretty big family sometimes. And now, if you know what is good for yourself, you will just let on where you've hid these relations of mine, before a worse thing happens to you."

"I—I am not sure, but perhaps——" began the Kaid, then suddenly stopped short with his head cocked on one side, listening intently.

Timbuctoo was also keenly on the alert, though he looked as calmly undisturbed as it was possible for any one to do.

Sounds of an uproar in the distance, but coming nearer, were plainly heard—angry shouts and cries, with every now and then the shriek of a woman.

The Kaid made a sudden movement, as if to spring to his feet and discover what untoward thing was to the fore, but the menace of the pistols grew instantly more threatening.

“Move but half an inch, and I’ll shoot you like a dog!” hissed Timbuctoo; and the Kaid sank back in a discomfited heap on the spotted skin, while the noise of shouting came momentarily nearer.

Then Timbuctoo spoke again, with the air of a man who has made up his mind. “There seems to be a leetle disturbance out yonder, and it’s coming nearer. I shouldn’t myself be surprised, if your people are coming to tear you limb from limb because of your cruelty to the poor wretches that you’ve bartered and sold. On the other hand, it may be me as they are intending to hack and to hew; but in that case, I warn you I’m going to have my

innings first, and as soon as the first o' them noisy inderwiduals bursts into that outer room behind me, I shoots, unless you up and tell me where them shipwrecked people are hid."

The Kaid squirmed violently, but did not speak, and at that moment the noise of a wild uproar swept into the room beyond.

Timbuctoo raised his right hand, taking careful aim. "Now then—one—two——"

"They are in the argan forest, four miles away in the foot hills," burst out the Kaid, in a frenzy of despair; and at the same moment Timbuctoo heard a hearty laugh behind him, and a familiar voice calling—

"Where are you hiding, Timbuctoo?"

## CHAPTER XIV.

### The Hut in the Argan Forest.

**I**T was not until the *Sylph* struck, that Sir Basil discovered his mistake, and saw that instead of running for the harbour of Arksis, he had blundered into a rocky cove, where his beautiful yacht, caught on the rocks, must be dashed to pieces by the tremendous waves rolling in from the ocean.

But there was no time for regret, or un-availing remorse because he had not taken his first mate's advice, and kept the *Sylph* out at sea. The only thing to be done now was to land passengers and crew as speedily as possible—that is, if landing were possible under such circumstances, and with the tempest upon them raging and shrieking in their ears, while thunder crashed and lightnings quivered.

No little boat could live in such an angry turmoil of waters, even if it could have been lowered, and Sir Basil was looking certain destruction for himself, and his passengers



and crew in the face, when a huge mass of water struck the *Sylph*, lifting her from the rocks on which she had grounded, and flinging her on to the shore of the little bay, where again she was caught and held, but for how long who should say?

It was a desperate chance, but, being a desperate man, Sir Basil hesitated not at all about taking it, and immediately shouted for volunteers to take a rope ashore.

Davidson and another sailor immediately sprang forward, and with the rope bound to their bodies, went over the side down to the seething, boiling abyss below; while those on board watched them disappear, knowing full well that their own chance of safety went with the brave fellows, whom the spume and fret of the mighty billows had already swallowed out of sight.

Meanwhile, in the hope that they might get through that seething whirlpool to the land beyond, a cage had been hastily fitted up in readiness, and the women brought on deck, so that not a moment need be lost.

The stewardess, who had faced death from shipwreck more than once before, stood calm and alert, prepared to obey the

orders of those in command, knowing well that in implicit obedience lay her best, perhaps her only chance of life. But Lalla and her mother clung to each other in the close embrace which meant that they would rather perish together than that one should escape and the other go down, whilst Sir Basil, watching them, groaned to think of the peril into which he had brought them.

The slow minutes passed like hours ; then, suddenly, the rope that had been hanging so slackly, tightened ; there was a ringing shout from somewhere out of the blackness, and then it began rapidly to pay out. They were dragging it ashore with a stouter cable in its wake.

After that came a breathless time, and one by one, Mrs. Trevor, Lalla, and the stewardess had been dragged in the extemporised cage across that yawning black gulf to the safety of the land beyond.

The *Sylph* was breaking up fast, and every one left on board knew it. Still, there was no panic, only the short, sharp orders, and the ready "Ay, ay, sir," of prompt obedience.

Sir Basil was the last to leave; and as he stood on deck, trying to fasten the rope about him, so that if he failed to get through that vortex of whirling black water, his body at least might be hauled on shore, a heavier sea struck the yacht, battering it with such tremendous violence as to tear a great hole in the side, through which the water poured with the roar of a cataract.

It was now or never, and fearing to be drawn down with his sinking vessel, Sir Basil leaped overboard, the big dog Boom jumping with him, as if to bear him company on that perilous voyage. Save for the dog he never could have won through, expert swimmer though he was; but, clinging with one arm to Boom's neck, and with the other hand catching the rope, he was dragged ashore.

The shipwrecked company had escaped with their lives only, and were gathered in a huddled group under the lee of the cliff, trying to make the best of a direful situation, when the tempest began to abate, the thunder grew faint and far away, and the moon came up, sending a flood of silvery light athwart the broken masses of cloud, although the wind still blew with hurricane



force, and the sea was running mountains high.

"There must be houses and people somewhere!" exclaimed Sir Basil, clambering up the wind-swept headland, to gaze out over as much of the scene as was made visible by the fitful light of the moon.

"People there doubtless are; the only trouble is that it would perhaps be better for us if there were none," replied Davidson, who had clambered up also, and stood shading his eyes with one hand.

"What do you mean?" asked Sir Basil sharply.

"This coast has always borne such a bad name, no survivors from wrecks are ever heard of as hailing from here," the mate answered moodily.

"Perhaps there are none to be heard of," returned the other quickly.

"I can't say, I'm sure; but rumour speaks of Arab slave-traders, who regard the human flotsam flung up by the sea as their own peculiar perquisites, and we have ladies with us," the mate said tersely.

Sir Basil groaned. But only for a minute did he give way to despair; then, jerking his



head up, with an air that was almost defiant, he said briskly, "Well, bad as the look-out is, we've got to make the best of it; and the first thing to be done is to make a fire; so come along, and lend a hand getting fuel to make it with."

This proved no difficult task, and in half-an-hour a bright blaze was leaping up, by the warmth of which the shipwrecked company dried their saturated garments, striving each to put the brightest possible face on the calamity of the night, and to assure themselves and everybody else that succour must come with the morning.

Mrs. Trevor and Lalla were huddled under one big cloak, whilst the stewardess sat close to them; but Boom raced up and down as if in wild delight at finding himself on shore, baying at the moon, and frisking round generally, as if being shipwrecked were rather a pleasant diversion than otherwise.

Then, suddenly, from out of the darkness there appeared a figure, all swathed in ghostly white garments such as the Arabs wear, who demanded in no pleased tone the reason of this trespassing of strangers in his domains.

His language was a queer mixture of many tongues, but by dint of using a little Spanish, some French of a very indifferent quality, and filling up the blanks with English, Sir Basil contrived to make the shrouded stranger understand that they were a shipwrecked company; that escaping only with their lives, they besought food and shelter at his hands until such time as the British Consul at Mogadore could be communicated with, when he should be liberally rewarded for his charity.

Upon this the stranger, speaking now in the country dialect which no one understood, and now in the afore-mentioned hotch-potch of tongues, which rendered his meaning only one shade less obscure, at once declared that everything he possessed in the world was at their service. They gathered that his village was some miles inland from the coast, and that if only they had strength to reach it, every comfort and luxury the country could afford should be theirs.

Sir Basil had an uneasy feeling that the fellow protested too much; yet, looking at his sister and her child sitting on the bare ground, lacking food, shelter, and everything else, he yielded, against his better

judgment, and consented to start at once for this inland village, if only some means of transit for the ladies were procurable.

To this the stranger replied that he had two beasts of burden tethered in a hollow on the other side of the hill, where he had left them on catching sight of the unusual fire by the shore, and that if they would wait for him a short half-hour, he would return with the mules.

"It looks as if we had fallen on our feet, Amy, and I shan't mind about anything else, if only you and Lalla don't suffer from this night's exposure," Sir Basil said, coming to tell his sister of the arrangement he had made for her comfort, whilst the stranger glided away into the shadows in search of his mules, and, growling ferociously, Boom followed at his heels.

The short half-hour the stranger had spoken of, grew into nearly two hours before he returned, and then there were other shrouded forms with him, their flapping cotton garments dirty and travel-stained, exuding odours of unwashed humanity with every movement of the wearers.



The crew of the *Sylph* shrank away in instinctive disgust, each man in his secret heart wishing for some weapon, were it only a good stout stick, to interpose between them and the treachery which might lurk underneath those dirty cotton clothes. But being absolutely defenceless, and destitute of everything save their wearing apparel, there was nothing for it but to hope for the best, and follow these unsavoury strangers, who so readily undertook to provide them with every good the country could supply.

"Where is Boom?" asked Lalla presently. She and her mother were mounted on one mule, which was led by Sir Basil; the stewardess, who was a woman of bulk, sitting in solitary state on the second animal.

No one had seen the dog, and though Lalla whistled, and Sir Basil whistled also, the two sending their shrill summons through the moonlit darkness of the night, there was no response, not even the distant whining cry that might have been expected from the big dog, had it been caught in a trap of any kind.

Then Sir Basil questioned the big, calico-enshrouded man stalking in solemn silence at his side. It was this individual whom



Boom had followed, growling his ill-will as he went. But the man knew nothing, or said he did not; and Sir Basil was fain to believe that either the creature had wandered so far as to be out of reach of the sound of the whistles, or else that there had been foul play, and Boom had paid the penalty of that too candid expression of ill-will.

Lalla shed a few silent tears over this unexplained defection on the part of her favourite, then quietly unfastened the wide sash of soft white silk that was tied round her waist, so that one end of it dragged on the ground. Boom was so clever, that she was sure, if he were still alive, he would be able to track her even by that faint clue; and then, leaning her tired head against her mother's shoulder, she watched with languid curiosity the progress of that long night journey.

There appeared to be no road, scarcely even a path; sometimes the way led up steep hill-sides, scantily covered with grass or patches of thorny scrub; sometimes it went downwards to thickly wooded valleys, deep in black shadows—fearsome places which made her shiver—and twice they crossed a noisy, babbling brook.

The journey seemed very long, and every one in that little company of shipwrecked people was thoroughly tired out, when at length they entered a grove of thick trees, which, from their likeness to an English yew, Sir Basil judged to be argan trees, for although those trees were supposed to be peculiar to certain parts of Morocco, he knew from travellers' stories that their habitat was by no means of such limited area as was generally believed.

Under the dark shadows of these trees they went for a quarter of a mile or more, until they finally stopped before a long, low shed, built against the side of a huge rock or cliff. It was a poor enough shelter, and so weary were the unfortunate travellers, that every one was too thankful for rest to have any disposition for grumbling.

A fire was speedily lighted, over which a big pot was slung, and a mixture of some kind warmed up for the hungry wayfarers; then, when it seemed sufficiently hot, in the opinion of the calico-covered strangers, to be eaten, the pot was taken from the fire, placed upon the ground, and the company invited to partake.

No one moved at first, until Lalla, with

a ringing, merry laugh, stooped over the pot, and after a preliminary sniff, poked her fingers in warily, extracting, after a good bit of fishing, the half of a chicken, which she carried off in triumph to share with her mother and the stewardess. Then the others crowded round, and, although every one was not so fortunate as to find tit-bits such as Lalla had secured, the hotch-potch, though coarse, was savoury and satisfying.

When the meal was done, the men lay down in a group to snatch such sleep as was possible under the circumstances; but Sir Basil sat until dawning, with his back against the door of the hut into which Lalla, her mother, and the stewardess had retired, whilst the very liveliest misgivings filled his heart, banishing even the desire of sleep from his tired eyes.

## CHAPTER XV.

### A Worker in Clay.

**W**AS it a week, a month, a year? Or was it only a couple of days since calamity had befallen them? That was what Sir Basil was asking himself, as, with unaccustomed hands, he shovelled soft clay into a rude sort of trolley, which two of his shipwrecked crew then toilsomely dragged up a steep incline, whilst a lean figure squatted on the upper edge of the basin from which the clay was taken, with a serviceable-looking musket held ready for instant use, should occasion seem to call for it.

Sir Basil's hands were sore already, but his heart was sorer still; only the pain was not for himself, but for the helpless ones in his care—his sister and Lalla first, and, after those two, the brave, capable stewardess, and the crew of active, willing sailors—all caught like unwary flies in the meshes of this voracious human spider—the big black man who called himself the Kaid of Isgueder.



It was in the dawning of that first morning after the shipwreck that the full extent of this calamity became known to these victims of disaster, when a file of spectral figures in flapping cotton draperies, all armed with muskets, came winding along the track under the argan-trees, taking up a semi-circular position in front of the hut and the group of still sleeping sailors. Then the big man who had first accosted them on the sea-shore appeared, and letting the dirty cotton draperies fall away from his brawny black shoulders, stood in front of his shrouded satellites, and informed the shipwrecked company that they were captives at his pleasure ; that they would be sold to the first Arab slave-trader passing that way ; and that until he should arrive, they were to work in the clay pit, whence the clay was dug for the making of the sun-dried bricks used in Isgueder architecture, such as it was.

His announcement was received with incredulous dismay ; but it was useless to protest with any degree of vigour against the dictum, seeing that a dozen muskets were held in instant readiness to repress any tendency towards insurrection on the part of the prisoners.

Sir Basil was the first to realise this, and to urge his little band of followers to, at least, a temporary patience and acquiescence, since it would avail them nothing to be wounded, or perhaps killed, in the futile endeavour to assert their rights to freedom. And then, with a brave, calm front, though an inwardly sinking heart, he had set the example of resigned fortitude, which his men copied with varying success.

Had there been a weapon in the hand of any one of them, it had been bad for the Kaid that day. But the trouble was that they were such a defenceless company, and, therefore, at the mercy of the great, black tyrant, into whose clutches they had fallen.

The two women and the child were to be left undisturbed at present, the Kaid condescended to say, with the air of one who grants a favour; and, though inwardly gnashing his teeth, Sir Basil was fain to be grateful for even such a mercy.

How many miles was it to Mogadore, and the nearest consul, he wondered; and then he tried to remember all he had heard of the natural resources of the country, so that he might judge whether a man without food or weapons could stand a chance of

winning through to the town with the story of black treachery to which the shipwrecked company had fallen victims. This wonder and speculation had absorbed his thoughts during the first day, but a whispered consultation with the mate during the darkness of the night had assured him of the entire futility of such a plan.

"It would take two months or more to go on foot to Mogadore, even if a man had provisions and a weapon to guard him from attacks alike of savage animals, and equally dangerous, treacherous men; then, allowing for at least a month's delay in getting the law to work, and five or six weeks to do the journey back again, by that time the rest of us would doubtless be got clean away to the other side of the great desert, or some equally inaccessible place," the mate had answered moodily; and Sir Basil was fain to agree that he was right.

But the mate had no more idea of calmly submitting to being sold into bondage than Sir Basil himself, and, between them, they formed a scheme for rising *en masse* one night, overthrowing their armed and vigilant guards, seizing their weapons, and making



a determined dash back to the coast, where at least they might hope to attract the notice of some passing vessel, or seek a refuge from their foes in the briny depths which had engulfed the *Sylph*. This agreed upon, they took turns in sleeping on guard at the door of the hut where Lalla and her mother were sheltered: and so the second night of their captivity passed.

The most untroubled member of that shipwrecked company was Lalla herself. It was true she grieved sorely over the loss of Boom, yet with the light-heartedness of childhood decided that he would be sure to turn up again soon; and, meanwhile, spent the days, which by good fortune were bright and sunny, in making short excursions here and there through the green vistas of the argan forest. The berries with which the hoary old trees were laden were not yet ripe—nor, indeed, would be for two or three months—but they were pretty to look at, and the whole place was more wildly picturesque than anything that she had ever seen before. There were high rugged hills, too, and funny little sheltered valleys, alternating with deep



basins, or wide-mouthed pits, whence clay had been dug for bricks.

It was on the third day of their captivity that Lalla made a discovery of a rather momentous character. She had been scrambling up the steep sides of a discarded clay basin, next to the hollow where her uncle and the crew of the *Sylph* were working, when she found that there was another hollow beyond, or rather a series of little terraces sloping to the sun; these were covered with a network of wooden frames, divided into spaces about eight or ten inches across.

Amongst these frames, shuffling along with a slow, dragging motion, as if fettered by some heavy weight, was a poor bowed figure, whose only garment was a piece of coarse sacking or sail-cloth bound about him by a length of fibre cord, and so bedaubed by the clay amongst which he toiled as to have become not merely the colour of it, but the consistency of it also. The skin of this poor creature had been white once, but long exposure to sun, wind, and rain, had bronzed him to a light walnut-brown; whilst his long hair, and straggling, unkempt beard gave him a wild,

ferocious aspect, which was strangely contradicted by his kind, limpid eyes, and gentle, almost timid, manner.

Lalla, however, was not daunted by his strange, rough appearance, but judging him to be like themselves—a captive of the Kaid—proceeded to make his acquaintance, with a view to sympathetic condolences on his condition. Approaching a little nearer, she timidly addressed him in halting Spanish, picked up casually during their stay at Tangier. But the poor fellow only smiled and shook his head, so she tried an odd word or two of Arabic upon him, with no better result; then suddenly catching sight of the heavy stone weight attached by a short length of chain to the heels of the poor toiler, she cried out in quick, impulsive sympathy—

“Oh, how cruel to fetter you like that!”

The man started violently, uttering a cry of amazement. “Can you speak English, the dear, blessed mother-tongue of the free?”

“Why, yes, of course, I am English; and, pray, what are you?” demanded Lalla, very much disconcerted by the sound of tears in the voice of the poor toiler in sackcloth.

“English, too ; only I had the misfortune to be shipwrecked on this inhospitable shore. But speak again, little maiden, and tell me about yourself ; my troubles are so familiar to me, that I am quite tired of hearing about them ; so talk to me in the sweet home speech, and let me know how it is that you have come to be wandering here alone.”

“I am not alone ; at least, I mean the others are not very far away. Mother and Mrs. Bent, the stewardess, are at a hut just over beyond that topmost tree that you can see at the side of that hill, whilst Uncle Basil, and the men from the *Sylph* are working in a clay pit just over there,” and she pointed behind her to indicate the spot.

“So many !” cried the poor fellow eagerly. “My dear little maiden, run and tell them I am here, and then, if they have human hearts in their bosoms, they will come and set me free.”

But Lalla could only shake her head sorrowfully, whilst big tears gathered in her eyes. “I am so sorry for you, poor man, but we are prisoners too ; and Uncle Basil and his men have some horrid sentries



posted to shoot them down if they leave off working, or try to escape."

"But there are a number of them! They can surely strike a blow in self-defence! If they don't, they will come to be what I am now, and death would be preferable to that!" he exclaimed bitterly, wringing his hands and sobbing like a child, whilst Lalla sobbed too from sheer sympathy.

"Oh, I am so very, very sorry for you!" she wailed.

"Bless you for those kind words, my child; but I had sinned sorely in the hot and head-strong days of my youth, so I deserved to suffer. Only those men you speak of, if there are more than one or two, tell them to rise and throw off the yoke of the tyrant, before it crushes them quite," he said, speaking in agitated tones.

"I will tell them; at least, I will tell my mother, and she will whisper it through the door to Uncle Basil, or Mr. Davidson, when they come to take care of us in the night time. But I don't go near the men when they are at work; for, yesterday, one of those horrid sentries pointed his musket at me, and I ran for my life:" here Lalla shook the long hair



out of her eyes, clenching her small fist, as if nothing would have given her greater pleasure than to personally chastise that same evil-minded sentinel.

“Poor little girl! Keep as close to your mother as possible, my child; only send my word to the men to make a bold bid for their freedom, before their strength deserts them. How I wish Ighli would come again! He would help me to help them—I am sure that he would.”

“Who is Ighli?” asked Lalla, with great interest.

“A black man who has been kind like a ministering angel to me; the only friend I have had in all these dreadful, weary years;” and again the poor fellow sobbed, as if the burden of his misery was quite too heavy for endurance.

“Years!” echoed the little girl, in dismayed astonishment. “Have you been here so long?”

“Yes; and never in all that time have I heard a word of English, save that which I taught Ighli to use, until you came to-day with your sweet words of pity,” answered the man, passing one lean, brown hand across his face, so that he could see more plainly

the fair-haired child standing on the ridge above him.

"What is it you are doing with all those boxes?" asked Lalla, making a move as if to go, for she guessed that her mother would be getting anxious at her prolonged absence.

"Making bricks for the sun to dry and harden," he answered, dabbing a mess of wet clay and chopped straw into one of the box-like frames, and then carefully smoothing it over.

"It looks rather nice work, something like making mud pies.—Did you ever make mud pies when you were a boy?" Lalla demanded eagerly.

"I don't remember about the pies, but I know we used to get clay, and build a dam across a little stream that ran through the beech-wood. One day my brother Raymond and I built the dam so thick and strong that the water could not break it down, so the stream overflowed, doing no end of damage, and making the Squire—that was our father—so angry that he cut off our pocket-money for a month. Ah! but what happy days they were!" and the poor captive groaned again in anguish of

heart, as he contrasted that long-ago past with the present.

Lalla gasped for breath. This man had had a brother Raymond ; called his father the Squire ; and spoke of the stream running through the beech-wood. Was he—could it by any possibility chance that this poor wretched prisoner, hidden away in the lonely Sus country, was the original of that turned picture which hung in the little room opening off the picture-gallery at Oakenhurst Manor.

“Oh, tell me, please tell me, what is your name, and where did you live when you were a boy?” she panted.

The man looked up from daubing clay and straw into another frame, surprised at her eagerness.

“I have not always been a credit to my name,” he said, with pathetic humility ; “but I was proud enough of it once, for I am a Trevor of Oakenhurst Manor, near Warminster.”

“Oh, oh !” cried Lalla, skipping in a perfect ecstasy of delight ; and then, without another word, she darted away to tell the wonderful news to her mother.



## CHAPTER XVI.

### A Critical Moment.

**T**IMBUCTOO felt that a whole mountain of care was lifted from his shoulders at that cheery shout, the voice belonging to the second mate, who was known as Jackdaw, the appellation having been bestowed upon him because he had signed on as John Dawson, while his black hair and eyes had suggested the altering and shortening of his name, to which he himself appeared to have not the slightest objection. Following his shout, the young man burst into the room, escorted by Ighli, and attended by three stout fellows from the steamer, all armed with long knives and pistols, two others having been left on shore with the boat, to guard against treachery or surprise.

At the sight of the Kaid cowering on his leopard-skin, with the shell head-dress all awry, and a general air of dejection and wretchedness about him, the young man called Jackdaw burst into a hearty laugh



of amusement, in which his companions joined, although the face of Timbuctoo did not relax one iota of its gravity, as he watched the convulsive clutching of the Kaid's big black hands, and saw the malevolent hatred gleaming from his fierce eyes.

"Is it a rehearsal for private theatricals, Timbuctoo?" demanded Jackdaw, when his merriment had subsided sufficiently to admit of speech.

"No, sir, it ain't a rehearsal, but the real thing; and there would have been justifiable manslaughter in this state apartment, if the black gentleman yonder hadn't opened his mouth when he did, and spoke up like a man, telling me where the survivors of the *Sylph* are hid," Timbuctoo replied, yet still not taking his gaze from the big man crouching on the spotted skin.

"Stiff as that, eh?" and Jackdaw laughed no more, but became instantly as grave and as grim as the other, inquiring, "Then there were survivors from the *Sylph*—how many?"

"I don't know. They are hidden away in the argan woods of the foot hills, so

my black gentleman says. Do you know the place, Ighli?" Timbuctoo put his question to the friendly black, yet still without moving his head.

Ighli answered that he knew it well enough, but that it was some distance inland, and to go there and return would take three, perhaps four hours, for the path was rough, winding up and down all the way.

"It can't be helped, not if it took three days or a week; though what cap'en 'll say, or what the owners o' the *City of Bristol* will say, when we do get into port, is more than I care to think about;" and Timbuctoo screwed up his eyes, ducking his head as if dodging a blow, yet never once taking his gaze from the scowling black face of the Kaid.

"Never mind about the delay; we have got our duty towards these poor creatures to do, and do it we must, at whatever cost. I only wish we knew how many of these people there are to be rescued. Think what a fearful thing it would be if one of them were left behind," replied Jackdaw, glaring at the Kaid as if he would annihilate him with a look.

“Ay, ay, sir; and so it would. But one of us must stay here to keep this unreasonable monster in order, while the rest go to the foot hills. Will you stay, sir, or shall I?”

“Just as you like, Timbuctoo; I’m not in the least particular. This is more your show than mine, and it is only fair you should run it to a finish; so if you like to go hunting I will stay and nursemaid this quarrelsome black baby; for, as you say, it will certainly never do to leave him to his own devices just now.” As he spoke, the young man pulled his own pistols from his belt, and, stepping forward, flourished them in the face of the enraged yet helpless Kaid, who looked as if he were fit to explode with anger and amazement.

Then for the first time did Timbuctoo take his gaze from the ugly black face, and, standing up, stretched himself as if thankful to be relieved from the strain of his watch. “Thank you, sir; then, if it is all the same to you, I’d be very glad to go, for Ighli says there is another poor wretch a captive here—has been here I can’t say how long; a white man he is too, and, I suppose, English, since it was he



who taught Ighli what he knows of the language. We ought to take him along too."

"By all means. The more the merrier, you know; though what poor old Ellerby will say, and how he will feel, when he sees a crowd coming aboard the *City of Bristol*, is beyond my powers of imagination. But off you go, and be as quick as you can, for we may have hot work to get clear away, if there are many folks about like-minded with this ugly, black villain;" and Jackdaw nodded gently in the direction of the Kaid.

The others tramped off without any further delay, leaving the young man alone with the crouching figure on the leopard-skin, who stirred uneasily every few minutes, but spoke no word, only glared and glowered with fierce eyes—mute evidence of what he would do if only there were no pistols between himself and the impudent white stranger who had dared to hold him up.

It was very quiet about the house. Sometimes the old woman in the outer room made a little stir of movement, or a hen clucked sleepily to her nestling chickens, whilst night came on apace, and Jackdaw was wondering a little ruefully

how he should be able to continue his surveillance of the Kaid when the darkness fell. But just then his doubts were solved by the shuffling entrance of the old woman, who bore in her hands a little vessel of argan-oil, with a piece of rag for a wick, which gave out a beautiful steady light, illuminating the rude, bare interior, and bringing into strong relief the black, lowering face of the Kaid. One moment only did Jackdaw let his gaze shift at the entrance of the old woman; but even that moment was well-nigh fatal to him, as, with a lightning rapidity of action, the Kaid's black hand shot out towards the spears which stood so near to him.

"Halt!" yelled Jackdaw, in a voice of thunder, at the sound of which the old woman shrieked with affright, as she scurried away in all haste, and the treacherous Kaid sank back, limp and inert upon his spotted skin, trying to look as if he had never lifted a finger.

"Well, this is not wildly exciting!" the young man exclaimed to himself, with a wide-reaching yawn, when an hour or so had gone by, and no sound broke the silence either in the house or out of it, saving the

occasional cry of a jackal, or the grunts of a herd of wild pigs, which held high carnival in the Kaid's melon beds near at hand. That yawn rather startled him, for it would certainly be highly dangerous to get sleepy at this juncture. The crouching black figure on the leopard-skin was wide awake enough, and even a momentary lapse into forgetfulness on his own part would probably give the Kaid a chance to effectually reverse the position between them.

If only the night had not been so dark and still, or if only he had not been so tired! But, with a great effort, Jackdaw shook himself, in order to banish that incipient drowsiness which again he felt stealing over him. Then he began to talk to himself, making remarks the reverse of complimentary concerning the black figure crouching on the skin; after which he told himself, as if he were some other person, how the smoke signal had been seen from the deck of the *City of Bristol*, whereupon he and his comrades had come off in the captain's boat to the relief of Timbuctoo.

"But when, after some trouble, we succeeded in landing, there was no Timbuctoo to be seen," said the young man,



gravely addressing the watchful black figure on the skin, at the same time yawning until his jaws nearly cracked under the strain of it. "No Timbuctoo to be seen," he repeated, almost as if the statement were a talisman against his overpowering weariness; "only a grinning black man, nearly, but not quite, as handsome as yourself, most respected and respectable Kaid; and this same grinning individual had a piece of dirty paper, on which, with a burned stick for a pencil, Timbuctoo had written a message bidding us follow the bearer, who was entirely to be trusted.—Hollo, what's that?"

Jackdaw broke off with a nervous start from the drowsy monologue with which he had been keeping himself awake, and listened intently, feeling sure that he had heard a creeping, crawling footstep approaching across the dark outer room, and a heavy sigh as if the person who heaved it were of asthmatical tendency, and could only get his breath in that husky, wheezy kind of respiration.

If only he dared to take his eyes for one moment from that crouching figure on the skin! If only he dared to see what kind of danger it was that menaced him from

the rear! A cold perspiration broke out all over him, the hair on his head seemed to rise, and stand erect, for a certain eager hopefulness had flashed into the fierce eyes of the Kaid, whilst at the same moment, the rag wick of the primitive lamp collapsed over the side of the vessel with a sputtering hiss, and went out.

There was a savage snarl of exultation from the Kaid, who apparently sprang up and flung himself upon the enemy who had held him so long at bay. But Jackdaw had foreseen this move, and, stepping to one side, had the satisfaction of hearing the Kaid crash headlong against the partition wall of the outer room, which, being frail, gave way before the impact, and crumbled like matchwood, letting the big black man go sprawling through to the outer room. Then in a moment there ensued an uproar that beggared description—a furious, loud barking from a big dog, that was plainly enraged; fierce shouts from the angry Kaid, who appeared to be fighting for his life with some unseen enemy; shrill shrieks of women; the frightened cackling of poultry; with suffocating clouds of dust, and an overpowering odour

of smouldering rags and oil which made the senses reel.

Jackdaw struck out wildly, intent on finding an exit somewhere, trying hard to remember, in the confusion of the moment, where the door was situated by which he had entered. He was still groping when, to his horror, an accidental stumble landed him plump into the arms of the Kaid, who seemed to be enjoying a momentary respite from that other opponent with whom he had been engaged.

Then came a stunning blow on the head, which caused Jackdaw to see stars galore; a hand clutched tightly at his throat, and he knew no more.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### A Great Surprise.

[T was late in the afternoon of the next day, and the *City of Bristol* was ploughing her way towards Puerto de Cabras in the Canary Islands, as fast as her engines could drive her.

Meanwhile, the crew of the *Sylph* had been pressed into service, to assist in the navigation of the freight steamer, for, as Captain Ellerby said, it was uncommonly awkward to have the first mate on his back with a broken leg, and the second mate so severely mauled from his pitch-dark encounter with the Kaid of Isgueder as to be unable to see out of his eyes, or even to lift his hands to his head.

The worthy captain also found it extremely embarrassing to have a real live baronet acting under his orders as mate *pro tem*; but, being a man of good, sturdy common sense, he took things as he found them, and accepted Sir Basil's offer of service in the spirit in which it was given.

It had been an anxious and exciting night, and it had been no small relief to those on board the *City of Bristol*, when, just before the dawning, there came the welcome sight of a bright upspringing blaze on shore, in token that the work was done and the boat ready to return. Then, as soon as the darkness lifted, the boat came off with the first load: two of the *City of Bristol's* men, a part of the crew of the *Sylph*, Mrs. Trevor, Lalla, and the stewardess, together with a wild, unkempt figure, clad in a strip of sacking, who wept like a child, and fell on his knees upon the deck of the steamer to thank God for his deliverance out of the hand of his enemies. But the boat had to make two more journeys after that; and, despite the strenuous endeavours of every one concerned, it was past noon before the anchor was lifted and the engines set going.

As he had been the last to leave the yacht when she was sinking, so Sir Basil was the last to leave the shore when the deliverance was effected, coming off in the boat with Timbuctoo, Davidson, Ighli, and Boom, which worthy animal, despite its severe flesh wounds, had played no

inconsiderable part in the exciting events of the previous night.

Ighli accompanied the party, because his life would not have been worth many hours' purchase had he remained in his duar after the part he had taken in the rescue of the white strangers, cast away on that inhospitable shore. He brought with him as the sum total of his worldly possessions, a hempen sack so heavy, that even with his great strength he staggered as he lifted it. But his delight at being on the big ship, when, with throbbing engines and churning paddles, she started on her course again, was a sight to see; for he danced, and skipped, and curvetted like a gipsy at a country fair, whilst Lalla, who was seated on a big tub upon the lower deck tuning her mandoline, laughed at his antics, and Boom sniffed inquiringly at his heels, as if eager to discover the cause of all the rejoicing. The mandoline had been brought on board by Captain Ellerby, when he returned to his ship after leaving Timbuctoo on shore, and Lalla had at once espied it when she was ushered into the cabin set aside for the use of her mother and herself.



“How funny that a thing like that should be saved, when everything else was lost ; but I am very glad to have it again, because it was my dear father’s,” she had exclaimed at the sight of it ; and then had taken it with her on deck, where she settled down to make the best of things on the rather dirty, evil-smelling freight steamer, just as she had done in the argan forest, when they were all the captives of the Kaid.

Mrs. Trevor and the stewardess were busy in ministering to the necessities of Jackdaw, who, when first found by the party returning from the argan forest, was supposed to be dead. He had been found lying under the body of the Kaid, whose muscular black hands were still clutching at the young man’s throat, though happily death had weakened their clasp somewhat.

But Hashem, the Kaid of Isgueder, had died, if not by his own hand, yet by his own fault ; for, in his endeavour to strangle Jackdaw, he had apparently knocked against one of the pistols in such a way as to cause it to go off, the bullet entering his heart and killing him in the moment of his triumph. The part Boom had played in the business was fairly easy to understand, for the poor

animal, finding itself enough recovered from its hurts to move about, had tracked Timbuctoo and Ighli to the house of the Kaid, arriving to scare Jackdaw nearly into a fit, by its slow, crawling walk, and wheezy snuffling. Then, recognising in the Kaid the cruel tyrant who had lashed him so cruelly, the dog had taken his own way of retaliating, until the pistol going off put an end to that fight in the dark, when he then mounted guard over the body, until Timbuctoo arrived with Ighli to relieve Jackdaw from his watch.

Naturally, it was at first supposed that Jackdaw had shot the Kaid in self-defence; but on coming back to consciousness, the young man had denied this, he having been unaware even that the pistol had gone off. There was no doctor on board to attend to him; so Mrs. Trevor and the stewardess had volunteered to do their best until port was reached. That was why Lalla was left so long to her own devices on deck, and she was still thrumming softly on her mandoline, when Timbuctoo came slowly up from below, leading on deck the poor fellow who had been captive so long to the cruel and tyrannical Kaid.

Timbuctoo had been acting as barber and

valet to the poor derelict, and, although his method of hair-cutting savoured rather of what is known in certain circles as "the county crop," the reformation in his client's appearance was so marked as to elicit a shout of delight from Lalla.

"Why, Uncle Edward, you look just beautiful!" she exclaimed, jumping down from her tub and coming to examine into the details of his toilet, fingering the suit of white duck with an air of solemn approval, and lifting the worn brown hands to note how clean they were.

"I'm just as proud of you as I can be, for I look upon you as my find," she said, making him sit down on an empty hencoop standing near, because he looked so frail, and unfit to walk about. "Of course, I know that Ighli had already made a bargain with Timbuctoo that you should be taken off as well as ourselves; but it was I who found out that you were a Trevor, and the long-lost heir of Oakenhurst Manor."

"Hush, dear child! Don't ever call me that. I long ago forfeited my right to any wealth of lands or gear my father might have to leave. But it is his forgiveness I want; and, gaining that, I shall feel so rich



as to need nothing else," replied the man, who had been a captive so long that he even yet could scarcely realise his freedom.

"I expect Granty will be so glad to see you, that he will even forget there is anything to forgive," Lalla said, with a serious air, as she stood poised on one foot, looking intently at the worn, furrowed face and whitening hair of the man sitting on the hencoop. Beard or moustache he had none left, Timbuctoo having deemed it best to make a clean sweep of all superfluities, in order that his client might start afresh at growing his hair and whiskers in any fashion he preferred.

"We will hope so," replied the man, with a sigh, for he knew the Squire of old, and made no allowance for the softening influence of the sad intervening years.

"It is very funny that you should be so little like your picture," said Lalla, after a short pause, speaking in a musing fashion, and holding her head on one side like a meditative sparrow; "but that son of yours, if indeed he was your son, was just the image of the picture, smile and all."

"My son—what do you know of him?" asked the bowed figure on the hencoop,

starting up in great amazement, and shaking all over with profound and painful emotion.

"Oh dear, oh dear, I'm afraid that I have made you feel very bad!" cried Lalla ruefully. "Besides, we don't even know it was your son; only guessed it because of his likeness to you, and because Parker—that is the housekeeper at the Manor, you know—found your old knife in the pocket of the coat he left behind him," she explained; then plunged into the story of her adventure in the woodland, and her rescue by the sailor, who ran away without his coat as soon as he had delivered her safely at the Manor.

"It sounds like Jack, certainly; but he was such a boy when I went away, and I had no idea he thought of being a sailor," said the man in a dazed tone. He had been so long shut up to the monotonous quiet of his wild, solitary life, that the manifold excitements of the last twenty-four hours seemed quite to have confused his intelligence.

"Is it so long since you came here, then?" asked Lalla, coming closer to the bowed, weary figure, and putting one hand with a gentle, pitying movement on the sleeve of his jacket.

"Eight or nine years, I think, but I cannot quite remember; I had no means of keeping a correct account, you see. But Jack was a schoolboy then, and I left him with his dead mother's people whilst I started for South Africa. I was twice wrecked, being cast away the second time on that part of the mainland where your yacht came to grief, and being found wandering and helpless, the sole survivor, so far as I could judge, of the Canary Island steamer that had picked us up from a little boat three days before, I was seized upon by the Kaid as lawful spoil, and used as a sort of human brick-making machine ever since."

"Never mind, you shall make no more bricks, no, not if you live to be a hundred years old," murmured Lalla, with a series of little consoling pats on the white drill coat sleeve.

"I don't even want to live so long," he answered, with a pathetic smile, which made Lalla feel as if she would like to cry, only, in the present limited condition of her wardrobe, the only handkerchief she possessed was a staring red and yellow one, borrowed from the captain, a mere glance at which



was sufficient to banish tears and provoke laughter, for it was like drying one's eyes on a Royal Standard from the mast-head.

Ighli had grown tired of dancing, and was curled up asleep on a sunny part of the deck, his head resting on the sack that was so weightily filled, and one arm flung round the neck of the big dog, which also slumbered peacefully.

"I think I will go and ask Mother how her poor patient is feeling now. Perhaps you would like to come too?" Lalla said presently, growing tired of inaction.

"Oh no, I will stay here, if you don't mind. I may even drop asleep like Ighli yonder," he answered, with a smile, nodding his head in the direction of the black man.

Lalla skipped away to inquire after the well-being of Jackdaw, stopping as she went to tell Timbuctoo that he had made her uncle most beautifully clean and nice to look at.

"Ay, ay; a sight handsomer he looks now, even if I do say it that shouldn't; but poor thing! poor thing! I doubt if he'll ever really get over the misery of all what he has gone through;" and Timbuctoo screwed his eyes up, until they appeared like mere

gimlet holes in his weather-stained countenance, whilst he wagged his head in a fashion lugubrious to behold.

"Oh, we shall make him so happy at Oakenhurst Manor, that in six months you won't know him for the same man;" retorted Lalla, in happy, light-hearted confidence, as she danced on her way along the deck to the dingy companion, whence arose a mingling of odours from the varied merchandise stored in the hold.

Her mother was not in the small, cupboard-like cabin to which Jackdaw had been carried; but the stewardess was there, and smilingly asked if the young lady would like to come in and see the patient, who was recovering finely, though it would doubtless be some days before he was well enough to get about comfortably.

"Does he look very bad, Mrs. Bent?" demanded Lalla, with that instinctive shrinking from horrors of all sorts which she invariably displayed.

"Oh dear no, miss; there's nothing to be seen but a white bandage. Now, that poor man from the brickmaking place did look bad, if you like. Talk of wild Indians! He was the very wildest creature, Indian

or otherwise, that I have ever seen or heard of," said the stewardess, backing into the narrow, confined cabin, in order that there might be room for Lalla to enter.

The little girl stepped in after her, hesitating somewhat even now, and sniffing warily, as if expecting her nose to give her warning of any unpleasant sight.

"Why, if I don't believe it is my woodland nymph, unless I am dreaming, that is!" exclaimed a voice from the bunk which ran like a shelf the entire length of the cabin.

Lalla gave a jump of amazement, and turned sharply to look at the bandaged face lying on the coarse pillow of the bunk.

"Are you—are you the kind sailor who found me in the wood, and carried me home that day, when I hurt my foot?" she asked, in an unsteady voice, whilst her heart beat so fast that its throbbing made her feel giddy and sick.

"And then ran away like a culprit, leaving my coat behind me? Yes, little one, I am the man; but I was a desperate coward that day, and with good reason," he added, half under his breath, ending up with an unsteady laugh.



But Lalla had fled, darting along the narrow passage, and up on deck as fast as her bare feet could carry her.

"Mother! Mother! where are you?" she shouted. "Mother, I want you!"

"Then you must wait for a little while, young lady, for your mother has gone to sleep off some of the fatigue of all that she has gone through," said Sir Basil, coming along the deck at this moment and catching her in his arms.

"Oh, Uncle Basil, I have had such a great surprise that I feel quite upset!" panted Lalla, leaning back in her uncle's arms, and pressing one hand tightly on her beating heart.

"What is the matter. Have you seen a mouse, or was it only a cockroach?" he asked laughingly, as he stroked her sunny hair, with a silent but heartfelt thanksgiving for her deliverance from the perils of the land they had just quitted.

"No, no, it is more serious—I mean, more important—mice and cockroaches are nothing; but, Uncle Basil, that Jackdaw, whom the Kaid so nearly killed, is my nice sailor who ran away without his coat, and Uncle Edward's son!"

“What next, I wonder?” cried Sir Basil, with an explosive sound as if all his breath had been taken away. Then, loosing his hold of Lalla, he hurried away to investigate the matter on his own account.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### A Family Gathering.

**I**T was a mild, moist day in the middle of February. The sun shone, and birds twittered happily in the tall trees about Oakenhurst Manor, telling each other in little trilling bursts of song that winter had really gone at last, and although the east wind might take to blowing again, there was very little likelihood of any more snow.

An air of happy excitement pervaded the Manor itself: servants darted hither and thither in an agitated, though futile, endeavour to do three things at once; Mrs. Parker, resplendent in a black silk gown and her best cap, rustled in and out of the various rooms upstairs and downstairs, here giving an order, there making a suggestion, and all the time breaking off, to run and look out of the windows, under the impression that she heard carriage wheels coming along the drive; Simpson, the butler, hovered restlessly to and fro



in the great entrance hall, now stirring the fire which roared and crackled in the big grate at the foot of the grand staircase, now opening the door to look down the winding carriage drive, and audibly wondering why it was that trains never could be in to time.

The quietest place in all the great house, on that happy, momentous morning, was Lady Alicia's own sitting-room, where she lay motionless on her couch, whilst with bowed head the Squire sat by her side, holding one of her thin hands in his own. There was no word spoken between them; there was no need for speech, and their hearts were too full for the utterance of the great joy that had come to them.

The travellers were coming home to-day. Sir Basil was bringing Lalla and her mother for a flying visit to the Manor, before he whisked them off to the Riviera, to stay until all danger from the east winds of our English spring was past. With them were coming Edward Trevor, and his son, John Dawson Trevor, familiarly known as Jackdaw, who had never used his father's surname previously, because of that old unhappy quarrel which had

made the father outcast from home and kindred.

"Here comes the carriage, Alicia. Are you strong enough to see them now, or shall I go to meet them alone?" asked the Squire, in quavering tones, as the carriage with its magnificent horses came bowling along the winding drive between the leafless trees.

"I have been strong enough to bear weary years of hopeless sorrow and longing, so my strength will not fail me in the face of so much joy," she answered, her voice as steady as his was broken and quavering. Then, when the carriage drew up at the great entrance-door, the Squire came slowly across the hall, with his old wife leaning on his arm.

No need for the poor brickmaking captive of the Kaid to sue for forgiveness at the hands of the father whom he had struck; pardon had been awaiting him during all the years of his terrible exile, while he had been wearing his heart out in that vain yearning for home which had been part of the price he paid for the sin of that unbridled anger of so long ago.

"Oh, isn't it all just lovely, and like a

fairy tale !” cried Lalla, dancing light-footed across the polished floor of the grand, gloomy hall, herself not unlike a fairy elf, or some woodland sprite. “Cousin Jack, aren’t you almost too happy to live?”

“I don’t know,” answered Jackdaw, his hand moving with a slow caress over Boom’s great head. “I’m very glad to get my Father again, and I’m very glad for him to come to his own people once more, with all the old bitterness past and forgotten, but——”

“But what ?” she demanded, with saucy impatience. “Are you sorry that you did not settle down with Ighli at the Canary Islands, to share the treasures of his heavy old sack?”

“No,” Jackdaw answered, with a moody air; “but I don’t like to think of the difference our coming here may make to you, for you know how you told me that day when I carried you home, that you were going to be the lady of Oakenhurst Manor, and what a lot of good you meant to do !”

“Oh, as to that,” answered Lalla, with a laugh, as she waltzed to the end of the hall and back again, “I would much rather be free to come and go as I please; or, if



you make a point of it, I will live here and keep house for you, when I am tired of travelling; then you can be master, and I will be mistress."

"Not half a bad idea that!" exclaimed Jackdaw, suddenly recovering his spirits; and at that moment the gong sounded for luncheon.

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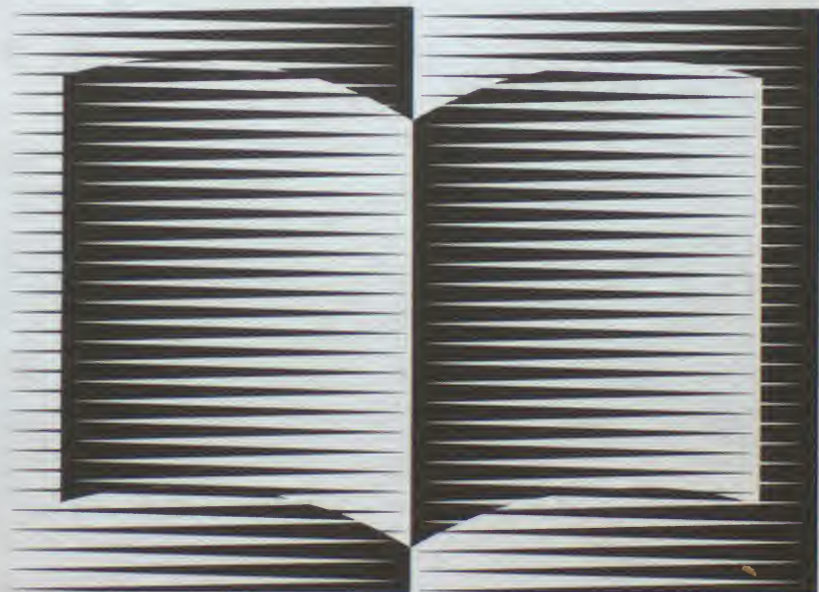
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